

HEROES OF EXILE

HUGH CLIFFORD

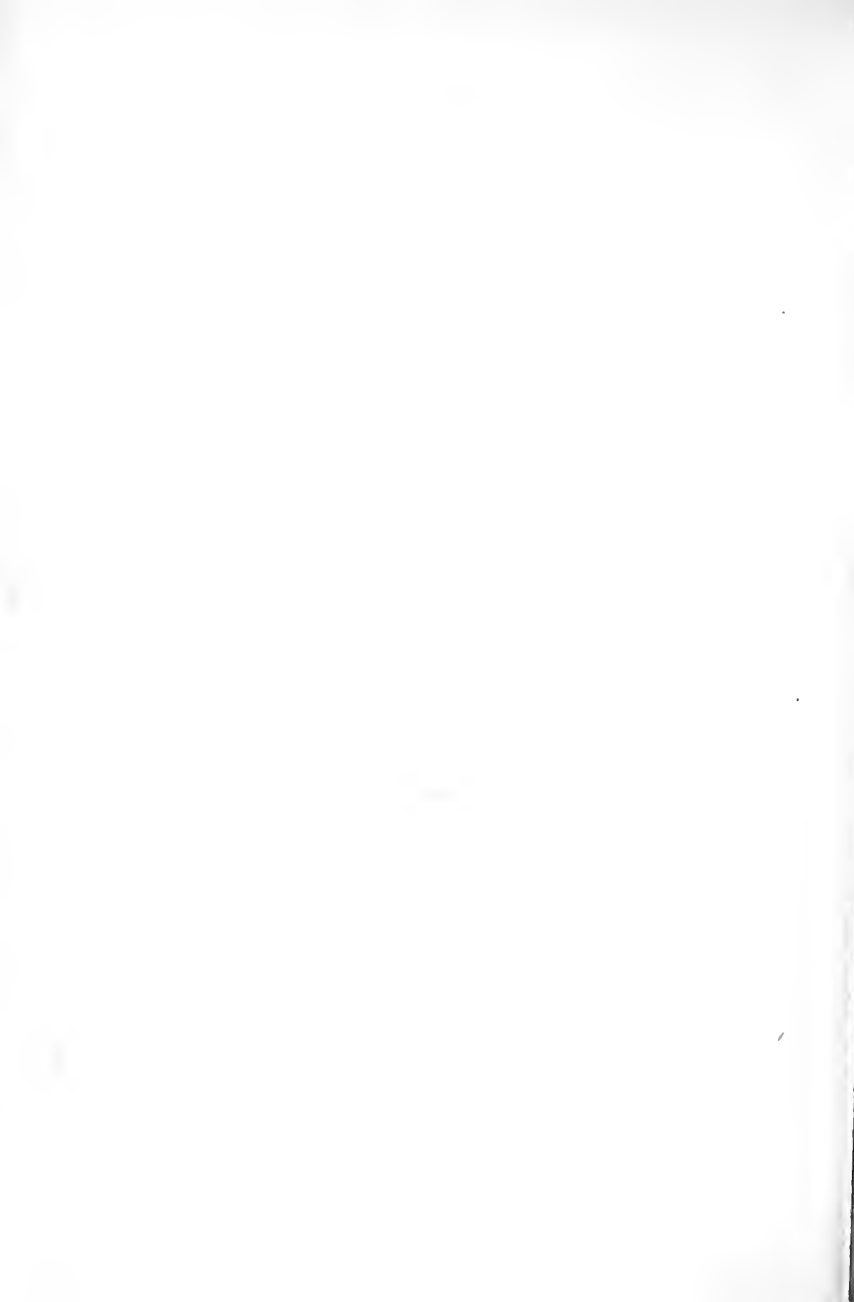


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HEROES OF EXILE

BEING

*CERTAIN RESCUED FRAGMENTS OF
SUBMERGED ROMANCE*

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

IN COURT AND KAMPONG.

STUDIES IN BROWN HUMANITY.

SINCE THE BEGINNING.

IN A CORNER OF ASIA.

BUSH-WHACKING.

A FREE-LANCE OF TO-DAY.

FURTHER INDIA. (STORY OF EXPLORATION
SERIES.)

SALLY: A STUDY; AND OTHER TALES OF THE
OUTSKIRTS.

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SUBMERGED ROMANCE*

BY

HUGH CLIFFORD

AUTHOR OF

"STUDIES IN BROWN HUMANITY," "BUSH-WHACKING,"
"A FREE-LANCE OF TO-DAY," ETC. ETC.

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To

M. H.

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

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FOREWORD

“ Of old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago.”

THE legal and technical language of salvage recognises three categories into which may be divided all classes of objects that are cast away or rescued from the sea—*jetsam*, *flotsam*, and *ligan* ; and for the historian (who, after all, is only the salvor of a few of the more precious things which the seas of time threaten to engulf), the fragments of human story fall quite naturally into one or another of these divisions.

The vast majority of the men and women who have made this world their dwelling-place, and of the events which have moulded for them their lives into the likeness of comedy or tragedy, are plain *jetsam*. They are strewn upon the waters, rise or fall and jostle one another upon their surface for a little while, sink and are no more seen. Those forgotten lives were of supreme moment to the men and women who lived

them ; those circumstances, those trivial happenings bulked so big in the vision of the folk whose lives they fashioned that they obscured for them the entire horizon ; but it was only for a tiny space, since the history here made was on a scale too puny, wherefore the waves of oblivion closed over them and they vanished as though they had never been.

For what we know of history is little more than the *flotsam* of lives and deeds. It is the records of those men and women who, through force of genius, through the greatness of their sins or of their achievement, through the chance of circumstance, or, it may be, through the mere accident of birth or of position, were thrust into prominence or power, and so, since their lives affected countless other lives, cannot sink wholly out of sight, but are doomed to float for ever on the surface of Time's great ocean.

But apart from these—the men who have lived and have been forgotten utterly, and those others who have lived to be eternally remembered, with admiration, with love, with hatred, with contempt, with pity, or with execration,—there are certain men and certain events, that once upon a time made history after their own fashion, whereof the stories are forgotten, albeit some more or less inadequate record of them has been

preserved ; and these are the *ligan* of history. Sunken deeply in the seas of oblivion, even to historical students (the salvors aforesaid) they are, for the most part, as though they had never been ; yet they are not mere *jetsam*, for to each one of them is made fast a line, be it never so frayed and slender, wherewith by means of some careful handling the long-submerged story may be drawn upward once more to the light of day. Sometimes the cord to which they are secured is half a page of crabbed print in some neglected chronicle—as is the case with the story of Fernão Lopez, the earliest of St. Helena's exiles ; sometimes it is nothing more permanent than the tradition preserved and handed down by word of mouth from father to son in some obscure family,—and of this the story of the Ross adventurers supplies an instance ; sometimes it is fine-drawn from the ephemeral sheets of cheap newspapers published in remote corners of the world, or from the true tales told casually in lands where newspapers are not,—as with the stories of the King of the Sedangs and of José Rizal, the Filipino ; sometimes tangled traditions overheard in the peasant huts of Asia furnish the only link that memory has forged, as is attested by the record of Somdet Phra, the monk, the King, and the father of Kings ; or, it

may be, the line that converts the *jetsam* into *ligan* is a bald chronicle of events and dates such as has furnished a framework for the sketch of Tobago's wrestlings with time. In every instance, however, the history is there, ready to the hand of him who cares to draw it up from the depths; and though it be encrusted with the slime and the sea-growths amid which it has lain neglected and forgotten, given some tenderness for days long dead, some little knowledge of past circumstances, coupled with a deeper intimacy with the present that has been therefrom evolved, the *ligan*—be it gem or base metal—may be made to shine again for an evanescent moment as once of old it shone.

Wherefore the stories in this book—despite the fact that I take leave to think that they are not without some slight savour of romance—are not themselves romances. They are history, not fiction; waifs and strays of history that have here been gathered lovingly into a new habitation; and it has been my aim throughout to make my heroes live for you again, as once of old they lived, so that you may live with them, feel with them, endure with them, *realise* them, not as shadow-shapes, but as men of flesh and blood and bone, like the rest of us.

They have none of them the flotage-power of those great ones of the earth who may not be forgotten; they are *jetsam*, not *flotsam*, these. All too soon, therefore, they will sink out of sight once more; but I shall have achieved all, and more than all that I have promised myself if, when oblivion again engulfs them, I shall have succeeded in attaching a new cord to these my *ligan* of history.

My thanks and acknowledgments are due to the Editors of *Blackwood's Magazine*, the *Cornhill*, and *Macmillan's Magazine*, in the pages of which periodicals most of these sketches have been published.

HUGH CLIFFORD.

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HEROES OF EXILE

THE EARLIEST EXILE OF ST. HELENA

“I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
Some Letter of the After-Life to spell,
And by-and-by my Soul returned to me,
And whispered, ‘Thou thyself art Heaven and Hell!’”
—FITZGERALD.

IN the early autumn of the year 1512 the indefatigable Alfonso Dalboquerque, the greatest of the many viceroys sent out by Portugal to rule the East, found himself as usual immersed in business, and with at least one devastating little war upon his hands. It was only in the preceding January that he had returned from a semi-punitive, semi-filibustering raid upon Malacca, which had resulted in the triumphant establishment of the Portuguese power in Malaya. On the voyage thence to India he had had the ill-fortune to be shipwrecked by the way with all his company, and to suffer the loss of “the richest spoils that ever were seen since India had been discovered until that moment; and besides this, many women who were

greatly skilled workers in embroidery, and many young girls and youths of noble family from all those countries which extend from the Cape of Comorin to the eastward," to quote the author of the "Commentaries." For more than three seasons past, too, he had kept one eye cocked on Hormuz and Socotra, while all the time his hands and feet were busy beating out the flames and trampling the embers of conflagration which the aggression of himself and his predecessors had kindled all along the Coromandel coast. He had actually set out in the direction of the Persian Gulf in the preceding year, leaving a more or less cowed "Bombay side" behind him, when circumstances had forced him to turn away to Malacca, and now on his return to Cochin it was to find the best part of his work well-nigh undone again through the inefficiency of the lieutenants to whose care, during his absence, it had been intrusted. To crown all, the annual reinforcing fleet, which had left Portugal in March, brought instructions from the King raising the question of the advisability of abandoning Goa,—the conquest upon which, above all others, he prided himself. This latter fact was one which he did not dare divulge to his captains; for at that moment the fortress of Benastarim, which dominated Goa, was in the hands of the Muhammadans, and he feared lest his determination to recover it should be thwarted by those under him if the gist

of the royal instructions were to become known. The "Great Alfonso," therefore, as the author of the "Commentaries" loves to call him, had his hands over-full, and enough and to spare of food for anxiety and worry; for indeed the troubled lands over which he ruled resembled nothing so nearly as the dry hide which the fakir showed to Alexander, the hide which rose up rebelliously in one quarter as soon as the emperor set foot upon its opposite rim.

These things combined to put Alfonso (who at the best was no very gentle knight) into a most evil mood, and among all the minor causes of his rage no one pricked him more shrewdly than the knowledge that within the walls of Benastarim there lurked certain Portuguese deserters, renegade Christians every man of them, who, seeing the lustre of their own cause waning during Dalboquerque's absence in Malacca, or caught, it may be, by the dark hair and saucy eyes of some Muhammadan maiden, had thrown in their lot with the infidel.

Roçalcão, the commander of the fortress, was a faint-hearted leader, and Dalboquerque had little difficulty in arranging for the surrender of the place upon terms very advantageous to the Portuguese; but to one of the enemy's stipulations he long continued to demur. Dalboquerque demanded that the renegades should be delivered up to him unconditionally, but to this Roçalcão would by no means agree. He

urged that such a course was contrary to the laws of his country and to the principles of his religion, and in the end only handed the apostates over to his conqueror on the receipt of a promise that their lives should be spared. The great Alfonso, the "Commentaries" tell us, "could not break his word"; but in spite of that unfortunate disability, he on this occasion went as near to the accomplishment of that impossibility as a man could well go.

"He commanded them to bring up before him Fernão Lopez and the other renegades," we read. "These men, when they found themselves in his presence, fearing that he would not keep the promise he had made them of sparing their lives, threw themselves at his feet, and with many tears besought him to have mercy upon them. But Alfonso Dalboquerque, who could not break his word, kept the promise which he had made of not taking their lives, according to the promise given to Roçalcão; so he ordered that their right hands, and the thumbs of their left hands, and their ears and noses should be cut off in memory and as a terrible example of the punishment meted out to them for the treason and wickedness which they had committed against God and their King."

Castanheda, who is less jealous of the reputation of the great Alfonso than is the author of the "Commentaries," says that, in addition to the above punishment, which as "a memory" was certainly calculated to fix itself in the recollection of the victims, the hairs of the heads and the beards of the wretched creatures

were plucked out by the roots, the raw places so caused being smeared with mud. Correa has still more disgusting details to report, and says that the punishment was spread out over a period of three whole days, and that more than half the renegades died from the effects of the torture.

Such barbarism as this cannot but be highly revolting to our modern humanitarianism, but before the great Alfonso be condemned in too sweeping a fashion, it is necessary to remember many things. To begin with, far worse treatment than is here described was meted out by the Portuguese during the sixteenth century to the natives of the East, often without any excuse of anger, and merely for the purpose of extorting information. In those days the peoples of Europe had not completely emerged from savagery, and the East, alas! has too often had the power to debase the moral standard of the white men who have settled in it. It is only another instance of the ineradicable prejudice which holds the person of a European to be more sacred than that of his brown neighbour, that this act of Dalboquerque should have received so much attention, while the barbarities practised upon natives by numberless Portuguese rovers have barely called forth a single protest in contemporary chronicles. With regard to the renegades themselves, the crime of which they stood convicted was, judged by the standards of their age,

the blackest that a Christian could commit. The Portuguese, though during the first half of the sixteenth century they poured into Asia in a continuous stream, were able to oppose only paltry numbers to those hordes of the East which they made it their business to subdue. That any member of these slender bands of adventurers should throw his weight into the scale of his fellows' enemies was felt to be an outrage against the white humanity they shared in common. It was, in the eyes of the Portuguese, as though a man were to head an insurrection of the brute creation against his kind; and since the foemen were Muhammadans, and the Portuguese were a people of the Peninsula, with whom hatred and detestation of the Moor were an inherited tradition, to this appalling crime was added a double treason—treason to God, treason to the King. If the great Alfonso had had the courage of his convictions, and had been somewhat less delicate in the matter of his plighted word, he would have killed the renegades outright, nor would any of his contemporaries have greatly questioned the justification of his action. This, however, he would not do: but the necessity of an example, patent to all eyes, was obvious. Therefore he wreaked his dreadful vengeance upon these men, sending them forth hairless, noseless, earless, maimed in both hands, to be known for all the days of their lives by this awful branding, and when

known, to be shunned with horror by the meanest of their kind.

The leader of the renegades, Fernão Lopez, has already been incidentally mentioned, and with his after-history we will now concern ourselves; for this poor wretch, whose very name conveys nothing to the average educated man of our own time, is in some sort to be regarded as the forerunner of the world's greatest exiles. He had experienced in person all that Alexander Selkirk endured, a full century and a half before that famous mariner was marooned on the island of Juan Fernandez; the cock, which he saved from drowning, and which became his closest friend, may have suggested to Defoe the parrot whose speech startled Robinson Crusoe in his solitude; and it was upon the then uninhabited island of St. Helena that this political outcast lived for years, long ere Napoleon came there from Waterloo or Cronje from the death-trap of Paardeberg.

After his mutilation, and during the remainder of the life of the great Alfonso, Fernão Lopez continued to live in India, dragging on, it is probable, a miserable existence, an object of contempt, derision, and aversion to his countrymen, shunned and despised by the natives, that most pitiful of all the sad East's pitiful things—the white man who has “gone under.” In 1515, however, Alfonso Dalboquerque yielded up his strenuous soul to God, and in the following spring

this poor victim of the great viceroy's wrath contrived to stow himself away upon a vessel homeward bound. He had left a wife and children behind him in Lisbon, Correa tells us, and perhaps he thought now, in the depths of his ignominy, to seek comfort from the woman who had once loved him. But as the slow ship that bore him lumbered up the west coast of Africa, drawing daily nearer and nearer to her destination, doubts as to the nature of the reception which awaited him in his fatherland would appear to have assailed the outcast, for when the vessel put in to water at the uninhabited island of St. Helena, Fernão Lopez, his courage to face the ordeal deserting him, escaped into the woods and there hid himself. His companions searched for him in vain; but they were homeward-bound folk, and such are ever impatient of delay, wherefore, failing to find him, they presently sailed on to Portugal, leaving behind them for his use "a barrel of biscuit and some pieces of hung beef, and dried fish, and salt, and a fire, and some old clothes, which each one contributed." Here we seem to see an expression of something resembling pity or sympathy for the renegade—feelings that may perhaps have been inspired by the remorseful recollection of less kindly treatment which poor Fernão Lopez had hitherto received at the hands of his shipmates; and "when they set sail," Correa adds, "they left a letter for him, that in case of any ship putting in

there he was to make signs to show whether he were alive or dead, and show himself in order that they might supply him with whatever he required."

And thus a new life began for Fernão Lopez, the outcast, a life that was destined to be his, with but a single interruption, for the remainder of his days. In the past he had gone wofully astray, even in his own estimation, from the paths of righteousness: now he was to live in self-imposed banishment amid quiet solitudes, far removed from the temptations of that crowded life whereby he had been tried and found wanting. He had consorted with men, and had sinned against them; and men, who oftentimes are swifter to punish than the God to whom all vengeance belongs, had taken awful toll of him for his wrong-doing, and had set upon him the indelible marks of their wrath. Now he turned his back upon them and upon all their works, hid himself from their sight in the peace and the seclusion of this untouched wilderness, and suffered the noise of their strife, of their contending passions, of their strenuous endeavour, of ambitions national and personal, all the clamour of the battle for wealth and for power which then rent the world, to die down in the distance to a hushed whisper. And in place of the fellowship of his kind, which he thus renounced, of the comradeship of men who had used him cruelly, he sought solace in silent converse with Nature, the great mother. The inviolate forest towered above him; the

untrodden beaches lay at his feet; no voices spoke to him save the cries of sea-fowl, the songs of birds hidden in the foliage, the busy notes of countless jungle-insects, and the sob of the sea breaking monotonously upon the deserted shores. Around him, as he sat gazing over the heaving waters, the waste of waves spread away and away to a horizon misty with heat, and that immense expanse held no suggestion of the existence of mankind; over him the sky arched in an unbroken dome, empty save for a single kite soaring and circling on wide effortless wings; behind him the forest, filled with tiny busy life and wild things which as yet were fearless, reared its dense tangles heavenward, and seemed more remote from men than even the empty sea and sky. It was to him as though he were the only being of his kind in all God's wondrous universe, and his very loneliness filled him with strange joy. He stood amid a world of beauty, a creature maimed and grotesque, his bald head ridiculous and mean, his lopped features horrible to the sight, his shrunken form clothed in his fellows' discarded garments, ill-fitting raiment, tattered and soiled, in which the indescribable, mouldy smells of the East still lingered. A sorry wreck of humanity this, an object for the commiseration of any who had seen him, but happy at last because he had won freedom and a kind of sovereignty. The delight which the sense of his complete isolation brought to him was

natural, for he was weary of exciting the disgust, the contempt, or the pity of his kind, and here there were no men to be startled by his deformities, to point the finger of scorn at him for the deeds which had earned so heavy a punishment, or to make a mock of his calamities. This desert island, by reason of its utter loneliness, was the only world in which he could live unmolested, and could rule with undisputed sway. The beasts, more kindly than men, would do him no dishonour; more docile than his fellows, they would accept him for their king. Therefore Fernão Lopez, the outcast, looking abroad with an eye suddenly become masterful, saw in the rock upon which he perched the throne of his desires, and felt the glow of satisfaction as he let his gaze roam over the territory which was his own to have and to hold, and to rule withal in such fashion as he listed.

First, with the four fingers that remained to him, and with that sorry stump in which his right arm ended, he set himself to delve in the side of a soft bank of earth until, with infinite toil, he had scooped for himself a cave wherein to make his home. Into this he moved the provisions which had been left behind for his use, contending always doggedly with the difficulties added by his maimed members to his solitary labour, and tending his precious fire with constant care both by day and by night, lest through accident it should become extinguished. The

haunting fear of being left suddenly without fire was for the moment his only care, his only anxiety, so simple had life become for this man who had won his way back to primitive things from out the turmoil of human existence; and soon, Correa tells us, "he set to work to find stones, which he beat one against another, and he saw that they struck fire and he kept them." We can see him in fancy sitting intent upon this task, the one stone held between his bare heels, its fellow in the only fingers that remained to him, pushing the tinder into place with the stump of his right arm, and warmed with the triumph of victory when, after numberless failures, the fire at last took hold. Here he was finding in solitude the manhood of which the cruelty of man had robbed him: here he was achieving, conquering, overcoming difficulties, unaided and in spite of all handicaps. Can we wonder if he, who hitherto had failed so grievously, was elated wonderfully by this his first taste of individual success; if he began forthwith to love Nature because she accepted him on equal terms, and while she resisted him, calling forth all his energies, all his ingenuity, in the encounter, yet ended by yielding to him the victory?

Released now from his anxieties anent the extinction of his fire, he was at liberty to inspect his domain, and a new joy must have been his as he wandered through the forests of the sun-steeped isle,

viewing all things with the proud glance of the possessor. In the woods he found many "tender herbs which were savoury to eat," and these he boiled with salt, living on them and upon such fish as he had the luck to catch. He had reverted to the condition of primitive man, the which is far from being one of idleness, since there is no taskmaster so imperative as an empty stomach; but be sure the labour was in itself more delightful than any that had fallen to his lot in the past, because it made a constant call upon his ingenuity and resource, and be sure the food thus won was passing sweet to his taste, since it was the fruit of his own toil, plucked from the island that was his very own, and no such bitter bread as had come to him as the doles of a contemptuous charity.

For a whole year Fernão Lopez lived this life, wandering through his solitudes by day, gazing out with ever-growing satisfaction upon the sea that held no sail, and sleeping at night in his burrow, the mouth of which he guarded with "prickly bushes." But upon a certain day, as he looked seaward, he caught his breath and his heart stood still, for what was that white speck pricking up above the distant horizon to the north? With anxious eyes he watched it, hoping against hope that it might be only a cloud of curious shape; but as the morning advanced it gathered distinctness and increased in bulk. Presently he was unable to delude himself longer. It was a ship under

full sail bearing down upon his island, a ship, too, of the people of his own nation. The memory came to him suddenly of all that he had endured at their hands. His maimed fingers rose to those unsightly cavities where ears and nose should have been: the healed stump of his arm stabbed and pricked with new pain. His eyes, fixed upon the billows of canvas yonder, had lost their look of pride and of mastery: they were cowed, abject, fearful. If they should capture him, these Portuguese sailors! The thought flashed through his mind. The ship was outward bound; they would bear him back to slavery, back to the unspeakable *inferno* of the East, which had wrecked his manhood and left him the pitiful thing he was! With a great cry of terror he bounded down the hillside, and muttering like one distraught, he plunged into the thickets, wandering on and on to hide himself in the deepest recesses of the woodland. Here he threw himself down and lay panting, oppressed by an awful dread. But little by little he grew calmer. Nature, serene and untroubled, stood about him, shielding him from his enemies. She spoke to him with many voices, and all were reassuring and fearless. She had become no less his friend because he had made of her his servant. She would give him timely warning of the near approach of their common enemy—man! So all that day and the next he lay with her gorgeous mantle of greenery drawn over him,

hiding him closely, and when at last he ventured forth, with anxious, peeping face, and limbs braced ready for precipitate flight, behold the men had gone, and his solitude was his own once more.

In his cave he found certain gifts, biscuits, cheeses, —new cheeses of Portugal,—and many other things to eat, and a letter “bidding himself not hide himself, but when any ship should touch there he should speak with it, for no one would harm him.” I fancy that I can see him, elated suddenly by the reaction from his recent fears, gloating over the good things that lay before him, and chuckling a little to himself at the letter—the first communication which he had held with men for twelve whole months. “No one would harm him,” it said. He would have a care that that should prove a true word, but he knew better than to put trust in the promises of men. Nature did not adhere to the letter and violate the spirit as Dalboquerque had done. The kind lap of Nature for him, and not the mercy and the honesty of his fellows!

Next, creeping round a promontory to the east, he lay watching the ship getting under way, hungrily eager to see her depart and give him back his empty seas; and as she threw out her sails to the wind and began to edge away from the shore something fell fluttering into the water. The canvas filled and the vessel swept majestically away, leaving a creamy wake astern, but Fernão Lopez had no eyes for her. His

gaze was riveted upon that struggling object which the tide was bearing nearer and nearer to him each moment, and at last he made it out to be a cock, with draggled feathers and panting beak, floating helplessly on the surface of the sea. Here was a thing outcast like himself, a victim of the callousness of man and the cruelty of fate. He watched its agony with a poignant sympathy, or it may be with a sudden recollection of what a tasty morsel a roast fowl would be to a palate long unused to flesh meats; and at last, plunging into the sea, careless of detection by the men on board the vessel, he caught the half-dead creature as best he might in his maimed arms, and so brought it safe to land.

Resisting the temptation to make a meal of his prisoner, Lopez carried it to his cave, dried it at his fire, and fed it with some rice which was among the stores that the ship had left to him; and since nothing quickens love more wonderfully than a sense of favours conferred upon its object, the man and the cock soon became the dearest of friends. "The cock," Correa says, "became on such loving terms with him that it followed him wherever he went, would come at his call, and at night it roosted with him in the hole." And thus love, of a sort, came into the life of this lonely man, the love of and for a creature which owed him everything, to which he, the outcast, played the part of an omnipotent and

beneficent Providence. I picture him to myself sitting in the sunshine at the mouth of "the hole," or roaming through the woods in search of the "sweet herbs," with the cock perched at his side or following obedient at his heels, an outlandish couple, the man crippled and gnarled, the bird dismally bedraggled, as befits a fowl which has been long cooped on board a ship, and has thereafter suffered grievously in an encounter with the waves. Yet I fancy that each was happy after his fashion—the one, because he had found something to love, something weaker than himself to protect and to shield from harm; the other, because the firm earth was very good to peck and scratch and strut upon after the miseries of the ship's hen-coop, and because he felt the man to be a friend and comrade with whom he was safe. They had long talks together, I doubt not, Fernão Lopez and his cock, the man telling again and again the story of his victories gained over the Nature he had bound to his service, the bird listening with his head cocked wisely, or voicing his sympathy in a lusty crow of approval.

More months passed, swelled into years, and the years were added each to each until near a decade had come and gone, and still Fernão Lopez lived on in solitude upon the island of St. Helena, and hid himself from sight whenever a sail on the horizon warned him of the coming of his countrymen. And Nature proved a loyal friend, for so long as he trusted

to her alone he remained safe from pursuit. The hole which he had scooped for himself in the bank became one of the stock sights to the Portuguese mariners who plied to and fro upon the ocean highway; and though its owner never suffered himself to be seen while men were abroad in his kingdom, his fame spread far and wide, and came at last to the ears of the King of Portugal. He therefore sent a letter to Fernão, promising him safe conduct if he would return to his fatherland; but the exile had learned to put not his trust in princes or in any of the children of men. Yet, about this time, an intruder broke in upon his solitude. From one of the ships that touched at St. Helena a Javanese slave-boy made his escape, hiding himself in the woods and baffling his pursuers. Fernão found this youth when the ship had gone upon her way, and I expect that it was with no great pleasure that he saw his long *tête-à-tête* with his beloved cock interrupted by this unlooked-for visitor. Albeit he was maimed, Fernão Lopez was still a white man, and a white man of the sixteenth century, who regarded all brown folk as children of the devil pre-ordained to slavery and to subjection, wherefore it is probable that he treated the Javanese youngster with less kindness than he had shown to the half-drowned fowl, and was all the more tyrannical in his usage of him because he held stored in his memory the wrongs which he had himself endured, and the thought of

the sneers with which in the East natives had been wont to mock his deformities. Moreover, by this time Lopez had been long enough upon the island to get well set in his groove, to love the solitude which had given to him his only experience of liberty and of power, and therefore any change must needs have been distasteful. It must have irked him sorely to see this brown man, whose company fate had thrust upon him, making free with *his* forests, trying to snare *his* birds and fish, even jostling the pampered cock, it may be, and generally comporting himself with the insolence and arrogance of man in the heart of this shrine of Nature, wherein Lopez was the high priest and in some sort the presiding deity. The restlessness of this human creature, too, must have got upon the nerves of one who had lived so long alone with inanimate things or with the wild creatures of the woods; and it is safe to infer that the Javanese slave-boy had a somewhat sorry time of it, and often longed to find himself back on board the ship which he had quitted. In pursuance of this desire he declared himself to the crew of the first vessel which touched at the island, giving himself up, and consenting to discover the place where the white man lay in hiding. He had many scores to pay off against Fernão Lopez doubtless; but it is none the less difficult to forgive his treachery, though it is said that the captain of the ship terrified him by threats,

for the Portuguese were curious to see in the flesh the man whose name and story were on every tongue.

Led by the Javanese, therefore, Pero Gomez Teixeira, the captain aforesaid, went with a party of his people into the woods to the spot where Lopez was concealed and effected his capture. "And when he found that he was taken he made loud outcries, thinking that they were going to take him on board;" for now he had fallen once more into the hands of his compatriots, and saw his peace wantonly broken through the agency of the only thing that he could not trust, his inveterate enemy, Man. "But Pero Gomez consoled him," we are glad to read, "and talked for a long time with him, and assured him that he would not carry him away, and gave him many things, although he did not care for them, but very earnestly besought him to take the youth with him in the ship. Pero Gomez, therefore, took him, on receiving a promise from Lopez that he would not hide himself from the crews. And when this had been agreed to, Pero Gomez left him with a paper, signed and sealed, wherein he desired all captains who might touch there of their kindness not to use any force in desiring to carry him to Portugal against his will, for it was from fear of this that Fernão Lopez used in bygone times to hide himself. Therefore he gave him a safeguard in the King's name, and swore to it, that no one should carry him away from the island against his will."

But I suspect that the safeguard was of less value to Fernão Lopez—the man who had gone forth so completely from among the ranks of his fellows that he had ceased to “care” for presents of white men’s gear—than was the promise that the Javanese youth should forthwith be removed, for this was a gift indeed, since it gave him back a no less prized possession than his precious solitude. Here we have a picture of the man to whom loneliness with Nature has become a necessity; and no one perhaps who has not himself experienced isolation, and learned to love, not hate it, will sympathise as I do with the exile’s keen desire to be left quite alone once more.

From this time forward Lopez was somewhat less shy of the crews of passing ships, though he probably watched them come with regret, as unwelcome intruders upon his peace, and saw them go upon their way with very genuine relief. But this renewed intercourse with his compatriots would seem to have recalled to his recollection the teachings of the religion in which he had been reared, for after some years he determined to visit Europe for the purpose of obtaining absolution for his sins. What this resolution must have cost him, what the pang of uprooting must have been to him, it is not easy to estimate; and nothing short of the unquestioning faith in the teachings of his Church, which cropped up so constantly and in such unlooked-for quarters among the

Portuguese of the sixteenth century, would have sufficed to nerve him for the effort. Many times, it may be, his heart failed him at the last moment, and he watched ships depart and then went back to "the hole," feeling that it was beyond his power to quit it; but conscience, which, though it makes cowards of us all, endows a few of us, here and there, with a courage that is not our own, in the end prevailed. So Fernão Lopez, the outcast, who had reinstated himself in the opinions of men by the appeal which the solitary life he had led for so many years made to their imaginations, was taken on board a homeward-bound vessel, and was carried over the sea to Portugal.

But a blended fear and dislike of his kind had become by now a veritable obsession. The noise and clamour of the busy port affrighted, jarred him, who was used to the great murmuring silence of the deep forests and the long empty beaches. The hurry, the energy, the rush, and the strife of the strenuous life around him dismayed and irked him, and set him yearning after the solitude that had been his, and after the only spot on earth in which he had been able to find peace. Therefore he disembarked by stealth, and lay hidden from the sight of prying eyes in the house of the captain of his ship, and afterwards "went by night to converse with the King and the Queen, who gave him a hermitage and houses of friars wherein he might remain; but he would accept nought

of this, but obtained permission of the King and went to Rome."

"A hermitage and houses of friars," indeed, were things little suited to the taste of one who had found even the company of a single Javanese slave-boy too much for him. His notions concerning solitude were not those of other men. The very thought of the holy friars welcoming him as a guest whose coming made a delightful break in the monotony of their lives, plying him, perhaps, with the questions of eager curiosity, and marvelling at his mutilations and at his experiences, were enough in itself to drive him mad. Of course he would have nought of it, for his one desire was to return to his island as soon as the business which had driven him forth from it should be despatched. This was the confession of his sins, and why a visit to Rome should have been necessary for the purpose requires a word or two of explanation.

Priests of the Roman Catholic Church are given faculties for the shriving of penitents who make confession to them; but there are certain sins that are called "reserved cases," for which no ordinary priest or bishop has authority to grant absolution. In quite recent times the hearing of the confessions of those who stood self-convicted of sins coming under this category was delegated by the Pope to one or more of his cardinals, but in the sixteenth century the Pope himself frequently heard such confessions in person.

A high platform was erected in one of the transepts of St. Peter's, with steps leading up to it on every side, and upon this dais the Pope, or the cardinal to whom he had delegated his powers, took his seat in the sight of all the people. Then one by one the penitents, bowed down by the consciousness of sin well-nigh unforgivable, climbed the steep stair, and kneeling at the feet of the Vicar of Christ, sobbed out the story of their transgressions. The folds of the long robe of the Pope would be thrown about them to shield them from curious eyes, and when the solemn words of absolution had been uttered, the penitents would step down into the crowd lightly, as Christian stepped when he had cast his burden. It was a pious practice of many charitable people, both men and women of unblemished character, to present themselves with the real penitents on these occasions, to cover their shame and to hide from the curious who were the guilty ones and who the innocent; but this kindly fraud can have availed nothing in the case of Fernão Lopez. The terrible mutilations which no artifice could conceal told their own tale all too distinctly.

This scene used to be enacted during Holy Week in each year, and to the high platform in the transept of St. Peter's Fernão came one Maundy Thursday to cleanse his soul from sin. His was the double crime of apostasy and of taking up arms for the infidels against a Christian people, and only absolution

pronounced by the Pope himself could give to his troubled spirit the peace he sought. This had been the incentive which had driven him forth from his island; this penitent's scaffold, reared high above the sea of upturned faces, the end of his pilgrimage, the object of his long journey. Painfully, with his marred face pale and drawn, his hairless head uncovered, his maimed hand and arm visible to all, he clambered up the steep stairs, and throwing himself on his knees, poured out the story of his sins in such broken speech as his long silence had left to him. Then a kind arm was cast about his shoulders, the Pope's white mantle covered him, a great peace came to him through his strong faith, and to the kneeling multitude around there seemed to sound a distant echo of the joy in heaven at one poor sinner doing penance.

Thereafter the Pope gave him audience, and asked him to name the boon he most desired; but Fernão Lopez had but a single wish in life, and but a single fear. He longed to return to St. Helena and to solitude; he feared lest the King of Portugal should detain him in Europe. So he showed his heart to the Pope, and the latter "gave him letters to the king that he would send him back again to the island. This likewise the King performed."

So Fernão Lopez, light of conscience at last, won his way safely to St. Helena, a king come back to his own again. He was fearless now, even of men, though

he had little use for their company. And "as time went on," Correa tells us, "he would show himself and converse with the people of the ships which passed by, and all gave him things to plant and to sow, so that he cultivated a great many gourds, pomegranates, and palm-trees, and kept ducks, hens, sows, and she-goats with young, all of which increased largely, and all became wild in the woods;" for this man, who had himself suffered tyranny of so fearful a sort, used his power over the brute creation sparingly. And here he died in 1546, after more than thirty years of solitary life.

It is good to think of him in these latter times passing his days amid the scenes and in the fashion which had become dear to him, freed from care and from the twinges of his conscience, and ruling in kindly ways the creatures which were his subjects in this little world that was his very own. Perhaps, when roaming through the woods, he chanced once in a while upon the spot which was destined long years after to be the narrow prison of a far greater exile, and standing there, looked out over the land and sea, the possessions which satisfied his every ambition. If so, what a contrast is presented by the minds of these two outcasts!—the one who had failed so wofully, and yet in the end had attained to so splendid a success, because he had touched happiness and contentment, because his every desire had been granted!—the other,

who had reached heights of individual achievement never equalled before or since, who yet was fated, like Fernão Lopez, to end his days upon the little island of St. Helena, but, unlike him, was doomed to rage in impotence, to eat out his mighty, angry heart, with foiled ambitions tearing him, as the eagles tore Prometheus on his rock.



THE ROMANCE OF A SCOTS FAMILY

“Oh, England is a pleasant place for them that’s rich and high,
But England is a cruel place for such poor folks as I!”

—CHARLES KINGSLEY.

ON the shores of a rock-bound inlet, swept by rude winds, and hung about for more than half the year by driving curtains of mist, there stood when the eighteenth century was waning a cluster of poor cottages packed away from the rest of the world on the fringe of the Orkney group. These cottages were inhabited by a family named Ross, and by sundry others all more or less closely related to the dominant stock. These people were a hard-bit breed, spare, weather-beaten, and big of limb, fisher-folk who risked life and health during most of the days of each year upon the treacherous coast, and tilled a few square yards of grudging soil to supplement the meagre living that they wrested from the sea.

The oldest man in the village was the head of the Ross family, a stalwart who had been out in the '45, and had reaped only hard times and an ill name from

that loyal sowing of a barren crop. His eldest son, a dour, harsh man, silent, thoughtful, and beset by trivial cares, toiled ceaselessly during the days of all his dull life to support a huge family of hungry, ungainly sons and daughters, and lay awake of nights, I make no doubt, wondering despondently how it would fare with those he loved when God called a truce to his long struggle with Fate. Too many mouths to fill, and far too little wherewith to fill them—that was the insoluble problem which stared him in the face. The infertile soil cried the question to him from its bleak furrows; the crash of the surf reiterated it; the wind howled it around the rotting eaves; but answer there came none. The monotony of toil, the constant effort, the certainty of failure at the end of it—for what had sufficed for a few was patently inadequate to the needs of the growing clan—hung over his life like a brooding shadow. The hopelessness of it wore this man down inch by inch: the darkness of the future walled him in as sadly as did the fogs that hung damp and chill around his home.

His children must move on and out. So much was certain: but whither, and to what end? His father, still known as a fanatical Jacobite, was a barrier closing many careers to those who were his immediate offspring: his fierce anger and the strong prejudices of the family forbade the King's services by land or sea. For the rest, the stubborn facts of geography limited

the chances of the clan. The Orkneys in those days were in some sort the very rim of the world: the men and women who dwelt there were cut off almost entirely from their kind. How should the great god Opportunity visit these lusty, ravenous youngsters in the banishment that was their home? Yet come he did, though it was in a disguise which at the time seemed shabby enough, the bearer of a gift so paltry that no man might dream of the golden things which lay hidden in his cunning hands.

A whaler, bound for a five years' cruise, put into the cove seeking to fill gaps in its complement which had been caused by an encounter with a press-gang, and grim George Ross sent his two eldest boys to sea in her, despite the wailing of the womenfolk and the snivelling of the youngsters themselves.

With the doings of the whaler all up and down the world I have no concern, until three years later we meet her again, brimming over with oil and blubber, putting in to water in a creek on the coast of Northern China. She waddled into the uncharted port, which was split in two by a projecting headland of tall, red rock, and sent most of her crew ashore to gather fuel and fill the water-butts. Then her skipper sat him down in the tiny cabin and read the "Pilgrim's Progress," which with the Bible and a few primitive technical books formed the whole of the ship's library, and as he followed Christian upon his wonderful way,

suddenly his vessel was seized by the children of Apollyon. The skipper floundered up from below, using language which would have set honest John Bunyan doing fantastic penances for a twelvemonth, but a glance around showed him in an instant that resistance was hopeless. Six file of marines, and twice as many bluejackets, all fully armed and wearing an exceedingly businesslike air, crowded the narrow decks. Two bearded officers, with sun-tanned faces worn hard by foul weather, trailed swords at the belts of their soiled, nondescript uniforms. The skipper, tugging ruefully at his forelock, recognised the servants of Old John Company, the dominant power of all the Eastern world; so curbing his tongue, and smothering his rage, he invited them to drink with the best grace that he could command.

The officers clanked down the rough ladder, and seated themselves at the table, while the skipper waited upon them with obsequious care.

"Sorry to trouble you, skipper," said the senior lieutenant, "but the devil must have his own, and Old John Company must be served next. Our ship—an eight-gun brig—is at anchor round the bluff yonder, and there she'll have to bide until she becomes a hulk unless we can get some one to navigate her back to Calcutta."

"Cholera," panted the junior officer, emerging suddenly from his tin mug, in which his nose and the

greater part of his face had been buried, "carried off both our navigators. The old barge is like a hobbled horse, and has been these two months past. We could put to sea and risk it, of course, but somehow Calcutta seems an awesome distance away, and the rocks lie spattered all over the seabottom 'twixt there and this as thick as the raisins in a plum-duff."

"So the long and the short of it is," chimed in the senior officer, "that you must make shift to spare us the services of some one who can navigate our vessel for us."

"There will be nae sic a body aboard this hooker, so help me!" began the skipper, but the officers cut him short. A whaler did not find its way round the world and back again by means of "plumb and guess," they said, and where a boat carried a navigating officer she was sure to have at least one understudy. This they impressed upon the skipper, emphasising their points by jaw-cracking sea-oaths, and hinting that it would be easy for a ship in the service of the Company to gut a whaler, maroon her crew, and thereafter to go upon her way without fear of consequences. The skipper, after one frantic outburst of profanity, resigned himself to the inevitable. He realised that he was completely in the power of his unwelcome visitors, and he knew that men were not accustomed to be over-scrupulous in their dealings with their fellows when chance threw them together on the coasts of

far Cathay—a land where no law ran in those days save that of the strong right arm. None the less, the Scots soul of him set him groping for a bargain. His mate, who was the only skilled navigator beside himself that the whaler carried, was also his best boat-steerer, and the loss of his services would be a grievous business. On the other hand, George Ross, the elder of the two brothers, had shown a remarkable aptitude for the acquirement of all seafarers' lore during the period of his service on board the whaler, and he was now quite capable of undertaking the task required by the Company's officers. By dint of skilful prevarication, some good solid lying, and by unblushing praises of young Ross, the skipper at last contrived to induce the officers to agree to his proposals, and the youngster, who had stood looking supremely raw-boned and awkward while he listened to his captain's unwonted eulogy, was soon placed in the gig, side by side with his small sea-chest. At the last moment his brother, who had not the slightest intention of allowing himself to be separated from his kinsman, leaped down beside him from the deck of the whaler, before the skipper had divined his purpose or had been able to put out a hand to stay him.

"I'll take this lad as a make-weight," shouted the senior lieutenant, and the bluejackets laughed at the whaler's discomfiture as they bent to their oars. So the skipper watched the Rosses being borne away

from him, and as he spat into the sea and sent a comet's tail of unpublishable adjectives after the spoilers in a prudently well-modulated voice, there was nought to tell him that he, that day, by his casual action, had laid the foundation-stone upon which the fortunes of a whole family were to be reared, and had forged yet another link in the great chain with which the British Empire girdles the world about.

George Ross, hard-headed, stolid young Scotsman that he was, took hold of his task of guiding the big, unwieldy ship upon her path through the unfamiliar seas with a calm self-reliance that bred confidence in his fellows. Navigation was no easy matter in those days for the sea-wanderers of the East, since men were still busy discovering the whereabouts of sunken reef and treacherous shoal by the simple process of running their vessels' noses into them; and many a good ship went to pieces in these uncharted waters, while her crew died dreadful deaths at the hands of the savage folk who dwelt on the sea-shore, or who lumbered up and down the coasts in misshapen junks seeking what they might devour. But young George Ross faced all the dangers of the deep, keeping his own counsel, scanning the rude maps and the pilot stars, alert, silent, grim, old and wise of a sudden with that age and wisdom that come to a man before his time

under the splendid, stimulating burden of responsibility.

Adown the long coast-line of China the ship passed, then wallowed through the trough of the sea that stretches from Hongkong to Singapore—thriving marts and harbours now which then were unpeopled islands whose very names were barely known to white men—the sea which lies between Indo-China and the Philippines. Through the narrow Straits of Malacca young Ross led her, looking out upon either hand at the mysterious forest-world where Malayan kings and nobles, peasants and slaves, lived lives unfettered by ethics in a land where Might stalked triumphant, and Right was an empty name. And so across the rollers of the Indian Ocean he sailed her, until upon a certain day the mouth of the Hughli spread its mud flats before her, and she swept proudly by its shallows to drop her anchor abreast of old Calcutta grilling agonisingly under the June sun.

It was counted a big performance for so young an adventurer even in those days when men wrought on a giant scale in Asia, and Warren Hastings, who knew a man when he saw one, lost no time in appointing George Ross to a commission in the Company's navy. Travel, which ever tends to widen a man's outlook, had freed the youngster from some of the prejudices bred in him by his fanatical grandfather; or perhaps he salved his conscience by the recollection

that, though he was now in Government service, he was not in truth a King's man, since his immediate master was Old John Company. Be that how it may, George Ross clutched eagerly at the chance thus unexpectedly offered to him, and with the silent, calm, dogged self-reliance and determination which he owed to his hard-bit ancestors, he pushed his way by sheer merit and force of character through all the ranks of the service, until he found himself in command of a frigate, with the destinies of a big ship's company in his hands. His brother went into trade, and did a good business among the islands of the Malayan Archipelago; and George, too, acquired a fair share of wealth, for in those days the Indian navy was in reality a large armed merchant fleet whose officers knew how to make bargains as shrewd as the blows they gave and took. Luck, which always befriended him, as she is wont to befriend the capable, sent him with the filibustering expedition which, under the leadership of Sir Stamford Raffles, wrested Java and its twenty millions of brown subjects from the Dutch in 1811, and during the peaceful years that followed, the instinct of his people asserted itself in George Ross, and he, the offspring of the Orkney fisher-folk who had fashioned their own craft ever since the beginning of things, started a shipbuilding yard, and laid down the keel of many a fine vessel for the use of the Company he served.

And so the world went well with George Ross, and the East claimed him for its own; but somewhere deep down in his Scotsman's heart the memory of his own people, struggling for a bare living among the shoals and under the fog-banks in that distant island, kept itself warm, and set him aching with pity for the hard lot which he longed increasingly to better. With all the colour and the warmth of the East around him, with his own days made easeful for him by crowds of serfs and dependents,—for this was before the age of anti-slavery legislation,—the contrast presented by his own fate to that of his kindred, who laboured hopelessly in the cold dankness of their bleak Scottish home, smote him with a pang of distress. And little by little a dream took shape and gathered form and strength—a dream that he would some day return to the Orkneys, and gathering all his kindred around him, bear them back to that land of perpetual sunshine which he had learned to love. It was a pleasant castle in the air, and all the more dear to George Ross because he was in general a stolid man of action, little given to the weaving of such fantasies. Yet it recurred to him whenever he had time for thought, keeping him company through the few idle hours that were his during those strenuous years, and so often as the dream visited him his jaw would set with that grim, square firmness which, his people knew, betokened a determination that was wont to make things happen

—even things wherein others might recognise impossibility.

Thus time sped, bringing to George Ross days packed with incidents big and little, days made rich by brave effort and the fruitful toil of body and mind, until at last there dawned for him, and for all whose fortunes hung upon those of Sir Stamford Raffles, the year of the great heartbreak.

Who among us all in Eastern Asia does not know the tale of that bitter tragedy? How Sir Stamford, brave and steadfast as ever, his noble spirit refusing to be crushed though the worst of all possible things had befallen him, announced to his guests, assembled around him on an occasion of rejoicing, that a despatch which had just been handed to him contained the mandate of the British Government restoring Java—his Java!—to Holland, and so laid his lifework in ruins about his feet! The splendid empire which had been wrested from the Dutch by the genius and foresight of Raffles, stimulated by the courage of Hastings, which had been seized by the dash and valour of a mere handful of Englishmen, and which had been transformed in the space of half a decade into a smiling paradise by the wisdom and self-devotion of its governors, was lost to us for ever—lost, be it remembered, because the despatches in which Sir Stamford disclosed the richness of the new colony lay neglected and unopened in a pigeon-hole of the Foreign Office! Years after these priceless documents

were unearthed, their seals still unbroken, and too late was learned the magnitude and the splendour of the chance that indolence had missed. To all those who care for England's greatness the loss of Java is a bitter memory, but to me the tragedy is sorest in that it surrendered the destinies of millions of the brown peoples that I love to the keeping of Holland. The theory which governs the Dutch colonial system is based upon the principle that over-seas possessions should be administered for the profit of the alien rulers and their fatherland, not for the benefit of their native inhabitants. This was the selfish motive that first led white men to seek empire in the East; but whereas the British have learned a nobler wisdom with the passing years, the Dutch hold fast to their ancient way. Therefore the Malayan races which people the Netherlands India of to-day are sweated and taxed more drastically than ever they were under their own rulers, since the Government of a native *rāja* is too feeble and inefficient to be able even to oppress its people thoroughly, the flesh being passing weak, no matter how willing the spirit of evil. Great Britain, on the other hand, works on a more generous, more altruistic principle, devoting the revenues of her Asiatic dominions to the development of the country from which they are derived, and to the good of the natives whose toil has contributed to the common wealth. And thus it has come to pass that the sin of

some obscure shirker of duty has been visited upon countless human beings in fullest measure, and without hope of remedy. It is not pleasant to think of the weight of the responsibility which rests upon the shoulders of that unknown bureaucrat.

How much of this Sir Stamford foresaw, peering into the future with the clear eyes of genius, who can say? but none can doubt that the bitterness of death was his in that hour which witnessed the destruction of his hopes, his dreams. For the men who loved him, those who had fought, and striven, and endured at his bidding and by his side, it seemed as though upon a sudden their world had been shattered to fragments. The heart for further effort was filched from them. What profited it, they asked, to toil and labour if the end were to be such as this? It was a sullen crew of disappointed men, with fierce anger in their hearts, that stood by Java during those last sad days and handed the land they loved over to the jubilant Dutchmen, who had never thought to look again upon the empire they had lost. And of this slender band of Britishers the most sullen and the most angry was dour George Ross.

By the terms of the treaty with Holland all ships still upon the slips after a certain date became the property of the Dutch, and Ross had recently begun the construction of a fine vessel that was to him as the apple of his eye. In his grief and rage he sought

comfort in work, which is ever the strong man's best and surest panacea. Whatever England's folly might surrender to Holland, his ship, he swore, should not help to swell the tale; yet it seemed barely possible that the new vessel could be completed and launched ere the fateful date arrived. Men dinned this opinion into Ross's ears, but he set his heavy jaw squarely, and was silent: only he got him to work as though a demon of unrest possessed him. Heavens! how that man toiled! Toiled by day, with his slaves and his craftsmen panting and sweating around him under the pitiless sun; toiled by night, drenched with the heavy dews and the dank sea-fogs; toiled early and late, with eyes blazing in their sunken sockets and aching from long watching, with body grown lean, and mind half maddened by the terrible strain! And once again "the thing that couldn't" was *made* to happen by the sheer grit and force and resolution of the man; so on the eve of the great surrender the *George Ross*, a mere hull, with masts and rigging ready but still to fix, slid off the slips into the clear water at Tanjong Priuk, under the very noses of the wrathful Dutchmen!

Taking all of his dependents who were willing to follow his fortunes on board his new ship, Ross set sail for Benkulen [then the Company's principal factory in the Eastern Archipelago], to which port Raffles had preceded him. Here he visited his old

chief, and asked for his pay, which, as was the custom of those days, was some years in arrear. But the Benkulen treasury was ill-stocked, and all the money needed to satisfy Ross's claim was not forthcoming.

"It matters not," he said to Raffles. "After this scuttle from Java I have little stomach for further service. Give me my ship in full settlement, and I am content." For a voice whispered to him that his days of labour were over and done, and that now, perchance, the time had come in which to enter the castle of his dreams.

So George Ross bade a long farewell to the chief he had served and loved, manned his vessel with a swarthy Malayan crew, and sailed away from Sumatra across the broad bosom of the Indian Ocean. He had realised all his property, and he headed for home after his many years of exile with a goodly store of wealth stowed in his lockers—a very different man to the raw youngster who had snivelled miserably on board the whaler as she put out from the little cove in the Orkneys. And as luck would have it, he lighted by chance upon a tiny atoll—a narrow belt of coral-reef girt about a fair lagoon—which lies like a speck in the very heart of those troubled seas.

I, *moi qui vous parle*, came one day long after to that lovely refuge of the ocean-tossed. During four weary nights and days, ever since our gunboat had broken out of the Straits of Sunda, and had left

behind her the smiling fields and orchards of Java, the noble forests of Sumatra, and Krakatau squatting black and awful on the seas between them like some devil's watch-dog, we had suffered many and grievous things. The mast-high seas had made a sport of us, rushing upon us in frantic horse-play. Our ship had entered into the frolic like a terrier pup romping with a pack of mastiffs, flinging herself at the throats of the rollers, and wagging her tail with its wildly racing screw. During that unspeakable time we had clung to our bunks and to the dripping decks, our bones well-nigh rattled free of their joints, the very souls of us churned into lather, our eyes blinded by the curtains of spray, our ears aching with the din of the tumult. Then of a sudden came a great peace. Through the narrow portal in the reef we glided into the lagoon. The ravening winds were hushed; the uproar of the seas was stilled to a distant murmur of breaking surf; and all around us lay the seas and shores of Fairyland. As we slipped onward through waters bluer far than those of the azure Mediterranean, the white coral bottom seemed but a fathom distant. Upon it was raised a world of dainty tracery, tinted with a thousand delicate hues, set with strange growths of coloured seaweeds, sponges, and aquatic plants of every form and variety of beauty. Sea-anemones with tentacles thrown wide, prismatic patches of jelly-fish, and brilliant shells, like gems carved

wonderfully, clung to the niches of the rocky floor, and through that dainty paradise fishes in number past all counting glinted and flashed, or hung for an instant poised and motionless. Around us on every side the fronds of coconuts rose and sank in the breeze, fretting the skyline—palm-trees in such serried ranks that though a month or two earlier 30,905 had perished in a cyclone, no gap was visible in all their unbroken front,—and a mile or two distant, across the calm water, the dust-coloured thatched roofs of the settlement rose in little pyramids between the greenery above and the whiteness of the coral sand below them.

But it was upon a somewhat different world that George Ross looked out that day long ago, for he was the first of all his kind to find this hidden cranny of the earth. No palms grew then above the low wall of coral sand which glistened in every part of its white oval; no sign of man was anywhere, and Settlement Island was nameless and untrodden. Yet withal it seemed a goodly place, and behold it was his own by right of discovery! He, who himself has been the first to penetrate into the Unknown, alone can understand the spell, the mysterious charm, that is imparted by the sense of exclusive possession thus adventurously won. So George Ross annexed the island in the name of England, for such was the fashion of his time, and made a special reservation in favour of

himself and those he loved. Here, he said, was the land in which the dream should at last come true!

Then he sailed away to Madagascar, rounded the Cape, ploughed through the belt of sweltering tropic seas which fringes the awful Coast, and then through sterner waters, till at length he dropped his anchor in the little cove, which had shrunk so inexplicably in his absence, and made known his new self to his ragged and wondering relatives. Death had made many gaps in that crowd of hungry folk, and the old people had passed to their hard-earned rest. But the others had increased and multiplied, and the problem which had puzzled George's father remained still unsolved. I like to think of him, the stern ship's captain who had braved many dangers, wrought many deeds, and learned to know a world which then was wider far than now, sitting in the poor hut wherein he had been born, telling wondrous tales to the simple folk his kindred, and hearkening gladly to the kindly Scots speech. I like to think of him, too, bringing ease and comfort to many to whom such things had always been strangers; but I know that very soon the narrowness of the old life began to irk him sorely, that the inaction wearied him, that the dankness of the fogs set his bones aching and his heart crying out for the sunshine and the luxuriant beauty of the East. And ever more these feelings grew within him, until

at last he had no choice but to return to the lands which he had quitted.

Through all the days of his exile the clannishness which is innate in his countrymen had never weakened, and now that he could no longer rest content in his old home, he was unwilling to depart unless a goodly number of his relatives would follow him towards the sunrise. They had nothing to lose and everything to gain; and perhaps, too, they had come not only to trust but to love this masterful kinsman who had dropped suddenly into their midst out of the grey sky, and promised them so goodly a future if they would but surrender themselves to his guidance.

So George Ross victualled his ship once more for a long voyage, and collected his sisters and his cousins and his aunts and every male relative he could lay his hands on, and sailed away from the Orkneys for the last time. After many days he reached his atoll—the Cocos Keeling Islands, as they are now called—and set about the making of a new colony with all his old energy and skill. But when the end of his journey was reached a disappointment awaited him, for a man named Hare, who had been connected with the younger Ross in some of his business, had found the island during George's absence, and had settled upon it together with a number of his native slaves. Ross did not allow the protests and the claims of the unfortunate Hare to turn him from his purpose by so

much as a fraction of an inch, for he was one not easily moved; but the presence of the intruder irked him, and the rival colonists lived on terms of almost open hostility. The details of what happened are not known, nor can they now be ascertained, but in the space of a year or so all Hare's dependents deserted to the Ross faction, and soon after Hare himself either died a natural death or was quietly eliminated. At any rate he ceased to be, and grim George Ross reigned in his stead.

This was the last struggle of the old seaman. The remainder of his days was spent in leisure or in the pleasant toil of building up the colony—the dream-castle in which, unlike the vast majority of visionaries, he had come to dwell. He took to himself a wife from among his own people, and in his island home a son was born to him,—a silent, studious, rather delicate youth, whose character was so foreign to that of his hard old sire as to be altogether beyond the latter's comprehension. George Ross would have liked to have bred a man hard-bit and stubborn-willed as himself, one who would have ruled the little community with an iron hand such as its founder had used; but since Fate had ordered things otherwise, he did his best by the boy, sending him home to Scotland, there to receive a good education in school and university.

Young Ross returned to the island a year or two before the old man's death, bearing with him a cargo

of books ; and when he came into his own he settled down to a hermit's life out there at the quiet limits of the world. He took a wife from among the Cocos-born natives, the descendants of the slaves and dependents who had accompanied his father and the ill-fated Hare from Java and the archipelago, and many sons and daughters were born to him. But under his mild and absent-minded rule the little colony languished and fell upon evil days, for Ross the younger had a poor head for business of any sort. The tale is told of how he hit upon the notion of sending a cargo of lime to Calcutta, where it arrived welded into a solid block of cement by the seas which had been shipped on the voyage, so that much good money had to be disbursed ere the stuff could be chipped out of the hold by the aid of pickaxes ; and this, I fear, was typical of his projects. Nonetheless, he scraped enough money together to send his eldest son to Scotland to be educated, and thereafter surrendered himself to the one passion by which he was possessed. This was the study of philosophy in all its branches, and the development and construction of a complete system of his own—a Scots predilection surely, and one perhaps which he may have owed to some far-off unknown ancestor. His, to my thinking, is a figure at once fantastic and pathetic—the man who can have known so very little of men and the lives of men, sitting here musing and dreaming in the heart of the

unsailed seas, framing the Great System which he fondly hoped was to revolutionise the universe: a bowed, short-sighted, prematurely aged man, terribly alone in spirit, who all the while was so pitifully incapable of directing the affairs of the tiny world over which he actually ruled.

But his son, George Ross II., was a man of a different type,—a big, hard-featured fellow, swarthy of skin, and strong of will and limb, who would surely have been a grandson after the old sea captain's own heart. Presently this son returned from Scotland, and at once a change was wrought in the life of the sleepy island. He cared not for books save in so far as they aided men to master practical things; and he smiled at his father's philosophy and ineptitude, albeit with no unkindly smile. He saw at a glance that the island and its drowsy, indolent community would surely die of sheer inanition unless something were done to revivify them, and that speedily; wherefore he introduced the curse of Adam into the little Eden with a thoroughness that dismayed his brethren, and set the ease-loving natives in a panic. Casting about in his mind for something that would grow upon that sandy soil, the fruit of which might bring wealth to the colony, he naturally thought of coconuts; nor did he take rest until he had taught his people, men and women alike, to plant and pick and husk, and to clean and prepare the copra

in a manner which brings for the Cocos stuff the best price of any on the market. All this took years to accomplish, for young George Ross had first to learn himself, and then to impart his acquired knowledge to each one of his reluctant fellows; and during all those years his father pondered and dreamed, while the manuscript of the *magnum opus* grew portentously. At last there came a day when the philosopher wrote *Finis* in his fine, cramped handwriting at the foot of the last page, and, laying down his pen, laid his life down with it; for what did it profit him to live longer in this world of banishment now that his great task was ended, and his service to mankind rendered for all time?

But when it became known among the people of the island that old Ross had been gathered to his fathers, the natives, who had hoped against hope that he might yet awake to free them from his son's inexplicable and unnatural passion for work, got up an ugly little riot with a view to doing the job for themselves. Then, in that outbreak against things practical—things which had never been dear to the dead man—the precious manuscript, to which the philosopher had devoted so much of thought, and care, and toil, was burned in the flames which devoured the Ross homestead, and so the Great System ended in smoke, as so many great systems have ended both before and since—a fitting consummation to the tragedy of a life.

But George Ross II. had now come to his kingdom, and his hand closed upon it with an iron grip. The natives found that he was an ill man to fight with or to cross, and the poor-spirited little rebellion against the fate of the able-bodied fizzled out ignominiously. Work—good, honest, manual labour for five and a half days a week—had come to stay, and presently a generation grew up, rapidly, as generations grow in the prolific East, which regarded toil as the common lot of man.

But George Ross, who had as great a passion for constructing a practical Utopia as his father had had for weaving visions upon paper, did not rest there. He had himself passed through engineering shops and the shipbuilding-yards of the Clyde ere ever he left Scotland, and he now opened shops of his own on this island of the Indian Ocean, turned the likeliest of his men into skilled artisans, and proclaimed that in future no lad should be suffered to take unto himself a wife until he had graduated as a master carpenter and blacksmith. Next he imported a large shipload of teak from Batavia, and set to work—for the old instinct of his forebears was strong in him—to build a schooner, undaunted by the fact that he alone in all the island possessed any technical knowledge. He told me that he drove every rivet in that ship with his own hands, that he dreamed of her for months and loved her like his own child, and when at last she

floated out upon the lagoon she was the prettiest thing of her size in Asia.

George Ross had married an islander some years before, and now his sons and daughters and those of his brother Charles were of an age to receive a proper education. It was in order that he might the more conveniently transport these little people to Europe that the schooner had originally been designed. The colony was thriving now. Its population of 300 Cocos-born natives had been augmented by the importation of Bantamese contract labourers. The annual shipload of copra was bringing in a constant and satisfactory revenue. But George Ross was an economist who, true to the traditions of his thrifty stock, never wasted money needlessly. Accordingly he made up his mind to save the cost of passage-fares for himself and his children, which would have amounted to several hundreds of pounds, and to try his maiden hand at navigation on a big scale, as his grandsire had done before him.

Packing the women and children on board the schooner, manning her with a native crew, and taking his brother, Charles, with him as mate, George Ross set off upon a voyage which to the average man would have seemed as adventurous as any undertaken by the sea-rovers of old. For months he and his brother took watch and watch about : they had a compass, a sextant, a five-year-out-of-date book of sailing directions, and

a certain amount of rule-and-thumb knowledge to aid them; but behind and above these things were the sea-instinct of their race and the strength of will and the unshakeable resolution of George Ross himself. More than once shipwreck and ruin threatened them: they met with calms that foreboded famine, with storms that well-nigh engulfed them; but the vessel which Ross had built with his own hands, and now navigated fearlessly across the unknown seas, fought gallantly through all dangers, and brought her master safe into the Clyde at last. The strain to which George Ross and his brother must have been subjected during that journey is something which it is not easy for the ordinary man to imagine. Think of it! Four hours of duty alternating with four hours of broken rest, turn and turn about for months; ceaseless vigilance, any relaxation of which might mean death to all whom these two men held most dear; a weight of responsibility which was made more heavy by their consciousness of little knowledge; and all God's elements to struggle with and overcome! Verily these were *men* who, "aching for an hour's sleep, dropping off between," yet brought their desperate enterprise to a successful issue, spoke of it in after years light-heartedly as of a common thing, and themselves bore no scars, deep branded by the stress of all that they had endured!

It was a proud day for George Ross when his

schooner was registered at Lloyd's, for men wise in the craft marvelled at her beauty and her finish ; and she was presently classed "A 1, sixteen years," the which is the highest rating that has ever been given to a sailing-ship of this type. If aught were needed to show the genius of the man, the fact that he, alone and unaided by skilled labour, had builded such a vessel as this schooner on a remote island of the Indian Ocean, far beyond the reach of all modern appliances, were surely proof enough.

George and Charles Ross sailed her back again to their atoll when their business in Scotland had been transacted, and for many years she served them faithfully. Then in an evil hour she vanished, leaving no trace behind her. She put out of the lagoon upon her last voyage, having on board, in addition to her native crew, a crowd of unruly Italian seamen whom ill-luck had cast ashore on the Cocos Islands. These ruffians had already given much trouble to the Rosses in return for many kindnesses, and their hosts were glad to ship them to Batavia by the first opportunity. The pilot, when he returned to Settlement Island, reported that the foreigners were showing signs of a disposition to mutiny before the schooner was well clear of the harbour, but what happened later no man knows.

"She *couldn't* have foundered," said George Ross to me, with tears in his eyes. "I know she *couldn't* !

I built her myself!" And when the howling of the monsoon keeps sleep far from him, he lies gnashing his teeth and torturing himself by picturing his darling tramping among the islands of the Pacific, robbed of her very name, and reluctantly yielding service to strangers who have no notion of how such a gem of a craft should be handled and humoured.

Since the days of his wonderful journey to Scotland, George Ross has paid many visits to the old country; but be where he may, his heart is ever in the distant Arcadia over which he rules supreme. So far from the madding crowd this little island has lain since old George Ross first chanced upon it, that the Scots family, whose story is surely one of the bravest of the barely noted romances of which the tale of the British Empire is compact, has been able to exert upon its people an unique and undivided influence, fashioning the minds and souls of men and women sprung from an inferior race into a nearer approximation to a higher model. Such an experiment, aided by many years and such complete isolation, has never before been possible in Malayan lands, and the results are extremely curious. The ability of the lower stock to rise to higher things has been amply proved, and it is interesting to note how many distinctively Scots qualities have been grafted on to the orientalism of the Cocos-born Malays. They have developed much of Scottish thriftiness, of the

Scotsman's love of order, regularity, neatness, and cleanliness—all virtues foreign to the race from which they spring. Their women-folk, who tyrannise shamelessly over the men since George Ross has set his face like a flint against the time-honoured practice of wife-beating, indulge every Saturday in a wholesale "redding up" of their houses, the like of which is not to be seen in all Asia. Chairs and tables, and knives and forks, have replaced the mat-strewn floors and the food-greased fingers of their fellows in other Malayan lands; and from their spotless dress, which lacks the national *sárong*, to their swept and garnished compounds, there is a spick-and-span air about the people and their surroundings which they owe to their white rulers. More important still, their whole attitude of mind towards many customs of their ancestors has undergone a total revolution, their Muhammadanism, for instance, having become so much modified by contact with Scots prejudice that polygamy is regarded among them as an unclean thing. Crime of any serious description has been unknown upon the atoll for years. The able-bodied men supply their own night-police, whose chief duty it is to see that moored boats do not break their painters. The whole population works solidly, regularly, cheerfully, and as a matter of course: the indolence of their breed seems to have deserted them, and thus they earn for themselves and their families all the necessaries and the few luxuries that

they prize, and have the further satisfaction which is to be derived from the possession of a number of goatskin tokens—the currency of the place—hidden cunningly in an old stocking. Their sole lapse from virtue's way appears to be that they are apt to construct and conceal from the sight of their rulers certain illicit stills—things not unknown in the records of Scotland, but startlingly inappropriate to a Muhammadan people—wherein they brew coconut toddy of an exceeding vileness of which they drink unwisely, in glaring defiance of the Holy Book.

But with their many sound qualities and their few frailties they are a simple, kindly, lovable folk, very trustful of their masters, and cherishing more than a little of the Scotsman's clannish devotion to their Chief—the man who has made them. For in truth this hard-headed son of a dreamer has come very near to realising an Utopia, a model kingdom free from the worst curses that beset our kind; and if the circumstances amidst which he wrought could have remained constant, his work might perhaps have endured for ever. But, alas! throughout the East in this age of progress—

“The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,”—

wherefore the days of the long and precious isolation of the Cocos-born are already numbered. The

construction of the all-British telegraph cable, which is to gird the Empire about, has necessitated the erection of a station on the atoll, and the work is even now in hand. Soon each morning will bring to the Cocos Islanders the news of all the world ; the rumour of great events will make itself heard amid those quiet palm-groves ; the mighty heart-beat of mankind, which dings insistent in the ears of those who dwell in cities, and spurs us all with a new restlessness, a new discontent, will break upon their eternal silence ; and who shall dare to prophesy what the results will be for this little Arcadia of the intrusion of strange men and stranger thoughts and ideas upon the island's peace ? For myself, I find it in my heart to regret the threatened loss of the simplicity and the seclusion, which have been the tools in the hands of an obscure Scots family wherewith to fashion something so near in likeness to the Perfect State.



THE KING OF THE SEDANGS

BORN out of due time, some centuries too late for his comfort and well-being, was Marie David de Mayréna, Comte de Ray, the man of striking personality, high courage, boundless self-confidence, and marvellous vanity, whom we of Eastern Asia will ever remember, 'twixt sighs and laughter, by the title in which he found so much compensation for adversity, of Marie the First, King of the Sedangs. We never knew him in the heyday of his glory and success; our acquaintance began when his trouble had come upon him, when France had set her spite against him, and later yet, when the little fairyland of Tioman, the island in the China Sea off the coast of Pahang, had become at once his prison, and a peaceful refuge for his restless, wandering spirit. We were all of us younger in those days, and his was a personality to impress wiser men than we; so we fell somewhat under the spell of the glamour that he ever cast upon those about him, called him "King" to his face with semi-humorous respect, and found some of the romance that was dear to us in this outcast with the strange history.

He was of heroic build, very long in the leg and broad in the shoulder, with black hair and moustaches, and a bushy grizzled beard. There was power in every line of that face, in the hard, determined, cruel mouth, the dark and heavy eyebrows which nearly joined one another across the bridge of the nose, in the broad smooth forehead, in the eyes themselves, keen, fierce, piercing, and cynical. He was an excellent shot, of great bodily strength, a man of violent passions, and uncontrollable temper; and as the leader of dissolute guerillas he had displayed a Gallic courage, dashing and reckless, and had writ his name large all over the *Hinterland* of Annam, in days when none save the silent Roman Catholic missionaries had had the hardihood to penetrate into those savage countries. He had impressed the wild people of a little cluster of Native States in that locality so deeply with his valour, and with that magnetic power of personality, which among a barbarous race counts for more than all the virtues, that of their own free will they had elected this outcast European to be their King, and had bound themselves to him by treaties of allegiance, paying tribute of elephants and much precious gear. The French missionaries, who had more experience of native Kings and of their winning ways than any man could desire, were delighted at the prospect of the turbulent tribesmen in their neighbourhood learning to live in peace and good-fellowship under the rule of

a man they feared, one who had succeeded in inspiring in their savage hearts a passionate devotion. Therefore, the good priests, who, I doubt not, were dazzled somewhat by the glamour that blinded us all in after days, lent their aid and influence to the King, and he in return solemnly declared the Catholic religion to be that of the State of the Sedangs. He was too wise, however, to attempt to interfere with the beliefs of his newly acquired subjects, and since the majority of them were Muhammadans, he too publicly declared himself a True Believer, and a follower of Allah and his Prophet.

Like the true Frenchman that he was, the King of the Sedangs had not been seated firmly on the throne for many days before he set to work to design the insignia of his new-found royalty. The national flag of the Sedangs was officially declared to be "on a blue ground a white cross with a red star in the centre;" pinchbeck jewelry, the Order of Marie the First, was fashioned by the goldsmiths of Hong-Kong, and the priests and chiefs were duly decorated: the King, magnificently attired, appeared in public seated upon a gorgeously caparisoned elephant, and the people of Sedang bowed down before him and did him reverence. He was King indeed, and for a while the display of his barbaric Court satisfied the cravings of his soul, and the French government on the coast winked at his kingship with no unfriendly eye.

But Marie David de Mayréna, Comte de Ray and King of the Sedangs, was a dreamer of dreams. He had built his Castle in Spain during many years of toil, danger, and privation, had built it, as so many do, when it seemed well-nigh impossible that he should ever come to inhabit it; and as is the manner of dreamers, having won his desire, he found his ambition still unsatisfied, and springing up in his heart new longings more hungry and importunate than the old. He dreamed of a time when he should make the land of the Sedangs a kingdom taking equal rank with other independent Asiatic principalities, when he should have fully developed the resources of the country, and have founded a dynasty in the East that should be perpetuated in the person of the son that was not yet born to him. For the accomplishment of these schemes it was necessary that the King of the Sedangs should step down from his throne, and condescend to rub shoulders with the common-place men who inhabit European capitals; that he should quit the atmosphere of his thirteenth-century kingdom, and learn for a space to breathe the fevered air of the white man's nineteenth century; that he should abandon pomp, and state, and ease, and the land which his own strong hand had won for him, and go forth into unromantic countries, like the simple adventurer that he was, to conquer new worlds. So in the spring of 1889 his Majesty Marie

the First arrived in Hong-Kong, and called upon all the most influential people in the place, leaving behind him the impression of a powerful personality, and a large visiting-card bearing the legend *S. M. le Roi des Sedangs*. He conferred the Order of Marie the First upon a number of unwilling individuals, from the sorely embarrassed Governor, who had not the remotest idea what to do with this undesirable decoration, to the sporting merchants, who could not induce their fellows to accept it in lieu of a two-dollar ante. Having thus made his presence known in a manner characteristic and ostentatious, with that inevitable touch of the ridiculous that ever marred his posing, the King of the Sedangs began to develop his plans.

He had thought that it would be easy to raise the funds which were needed for his projects locally, but here an unexpected obstacle to his success presented itself. The French authorities, who had informally recognised him as King of the Sedangs, so long as he was in his own State whence they were powerless to dislodge him, now suddenly and publicly repudiated him and his claims, reducing the erstwhile king, by a stroke of the pen, to the position of an outcast in a foreign land, desperate and almost penniless. Then Marie the First, a prophet unhonoured in his own country, took a momentous step. Solemnly and publicly, in the name of himself and his people, with

that complete lack of all sense of proportion and of the ridiculous that made him so delightful, he repudiated France! His action made us smile, his manner was so magnificent, so tremendously in earnest, but the very seriousness with which he regarded himself and his position as an outraged monarch, had more than a little of pathos underlying the humour. Having, so to speak, declared war against the land of his birth, the King lost no time in sending a telegram to Berlin, offering to the then newly crowned Emperor William the allegiance of himself and all the people of Sedang in return for German protection. The Foreign Office of the Fatherland would probably have been sorely put to it to locate the whereabouts of the State which they were thus suddenly asked to take under their protection, had the King's telegram ever reached its destination. As a matter of fact, however, the missive never got any further on its journey than Saigon, for King Marie had been guilty of the folly of sending his offer in open German, undisguised by cypher, apparently forgetful of the fact that it must be transmitted from Hong-Kong through the telegraph stations of French Indo-China.

When it was discovered that the perfidious Marie had attempted to hand over the land which he had won to the hated Germans, the most maddening excitement prevailed in Saigon, where seventy-five per cent. of the European population are officials, civil or

military, and at least twenty per cent. more are French monopolists, daughters of the Horse-Leech, crying "Give, give!" In similar circumstances, the authorities of an English colony would have smiled to themselves, and would then have taken such action as they deemed necessary, with a perfectly unbroken calm and a complete absence of noise. At Saigon, however, gentlemen in uniforms of many shades of red and blue rushed hither and thither screaming execrations, raged at the club, shook their fists at imaginary foes, fumed, stamped, cursed, gesticulated. Other gentlemen, suffocating in tightly buttoned frock-coats decorated with little tags of red ribbon, sat in their offices or took their *petits verres* in the *cafés* on the boulevards, working themselves into an indescribable state of heat and excitement, as they discussed again and again the action of the King of the Sedangs. The inspired newspapers (and, speaking broadly, all newspapers in French Indo-China are either inspired or are speedily suppressed) raved and howled in chorus. Whereupon, finding that his countrymen in the East were prepared to take him so seriously, Marie the First, King of the Sedangs, who never stood in any great need of encouragement to over-value his own importance, began to take himself with a profoundness of gravity that was truly portentous.

He spoke of himself as a martyr to the cause of liberty, as a lawful sovereign, at peace with England,

basely kept from his own by the tyranny of France. He assumed airs which would hardly have sat becomingly on the last of the Stewarts; and he spoke darkly of a certain order for his summary execution which, so he averred, had been telegraphed from Paris, and was then lying hidden away in the official pigeon-holes at Saigon, ready to be produced at the proper moment. The order, as he quoted it from a copy which he professed to have obtained by means of great cunning and strategy, was very simple and to the point. It contained only two words,—*Fusillez le!* “For thus,” he was wont to exclaim, “does France dare to treat Crowned Heads with whom she has cause for quarrel! What would you have? ’Tis in the blood, ever since that fatal day on which perished the King Louis the Sixteenth!”

But it was impossible to laugh at the King and at his pretensions when in his presence; he was so solemn, so brave, so injured, so impressive; and though men grinned behind his back, they sent the hat round for him in Hong-Kong, and had no difficulty in filling it to the brim with money to defray the cost of the King’s journey back to Europe. The King received the subscription with that grand air of his, which left the impression upon his friends that he was thereby conferring rather than receiving a favour. He spoke of the special privileges which he would grant to the merchants of Hong-Kong in

recognition of their loyalty, when in the fulness of time he should return to his kingdom; and he stepped on board the German mail-steamer, amid the half-ironical cheers of the spectators, bowing like a monarch in acknowledgment of the plaudits of his subjects.

The Hong-Kong merchants, who had paid his passage and had supplied his Majesty with a little ready money, had been actuated partly by a desire to remunerate one from whom they had derived so much entertainment, and partly by a truly British wish to see fair play, or, as they phrased it, "to give the beggar a chance." Here was an unfortunate white man, who had undoubtedly done doughty deeds in the past, battling bravely and entirely alone against one of the greatest Powers of modern times. In spite of the ridiculous posing, the egotism, the pomposity, and the pinchbeck jewelry and decorations, the figure of this lonely man engaged in a conflict so unequal, had in it something grand, romantic, pathetic, which fired their imaginations; and if a little ready money would help to improve his chances and to arm him for the fray, they were not the men to withhold it and to pass by on the other side, leaving him crippled and unbefriended.

When the King had started upon his homeward passage, the Hong-Kong police went from house to house collecting the pinchbeck orders which his

Majesty had scattered broadcast among his acquaintances; and these pieces of jewelry they subsequently sold by auction for the benefit of the goldsmith who had fashioned them, for the King, like many of his prototypes in history, had proved himself to be a bad paymaster.

After the German mail bore him out of our lives, no more was heard concerning Marie David de Mayréna, King of the Sedangs, for many months. Then little puffs of news, vague and intangible as smoke, began to be blown eastward. He was in prison at Ostend,—in prison for debt. *Les braves Belges* had had no more respect for his kingship than to serve him as they served other ill-advised people who could not pay their way. We mourned over him a little, for we had hoped for better things, but we told one another that this was the logical conclusion to his chequered career. Then, of a sudden, fresh rumours came to us. His Majesty Marie the First, King of the Sedangs, had paid a visit to the British House of Commons, where he had been received with every mark of respect and interest by some of our leading politicians; he had bragged to them, with the same unfettered freedom that he had used in his intercourse with us; he had impressed them—men used to bluff and swagger and the ways of political hucksters—just as he had impressed our simple selves;

and even the half humorous contempt which had underlain all our feelings towards him, had been lacking in the honourable members who were present at his entertainment. We began to wonder whether after all we had been fools, misreading this man whom our betters delighted to honour; and many among us who had hitherto been stolidly silent, arose noisy and triumphant, crying, "I told you so!" It was with absolute relief that we learned a week or two later that the lady whom the King had introduced to our fascinated legislators as her Majesty the Queen of the Sedangs was a damsel not too honourably distinguished upon the boards of a Parisian *café chantant*. It was then our turn to say, "We told you so!" to our abashed comrades, and we said it many times.

After this daring escapade, which had been executed, we felt, altogether in the King's best manner, the curtain of silence dropped once more, hiding his Majesty from the eyes of his Eastern friends, who had learned to love his meteor-like appearances upon the stage where he strutted so vaingloriously.

Then, with no word of warning, the King suddenly electrified us all by landing in Singapore, with a dozen Belgian gentlemen at his heels. *Le Congo* was at that time firing the slow blood of the Flemings to something not wholly unlike enthusiasm, and any scheme which had for its object colonial expansion and the opening of a new market to Belgian goods,

was sure of a hearty reception from the *bourgeoisie* of Brussels and other large towns. The King, who had ever had a keen eye for an opportunity, had realised this, and had not been slow to profit by it. Secretly a syndicate had been formed having for its object the development of the land of the Sedangs by means of Belgian capital, and the King had been placed in possession of a large sum of ready money. From the families of the Belgian *bourgeois*, who had thus opportunely come to his aid, his Majesty had selected a number of gentlemen to assist him in the administration of his country and the development of its wealth. He had made his choice cunningly from a class of men who thought much of titles and decorations, and who were withal sufficiently simple to walk open-eyed into such snares as the King might find occasion to set for their unwary feet. Thus they had all signed agreements with him by which he bound himself to grant to each a high-sounding official title, a position to match in the newly constituted kingdom of the Sedangs, and a princely salary. But tucked snugly away in the body of the document was a provision, to which none of the contracting parties seemed to have attached any importance, to the effect that no payments on account of salary were to be made until the land of the Sedangs had been reached in safety, and further that refunds to defray cost of passage to the East were to be similarly postponed. The titles,

however, might be borne from the moment that the bearer quitted his native country.

We were all delighted when we learned that the King and his suite had arrived in our midst. Life in the more remote corners of the earth has a trick of becoming achingly monotonous; and the figure of the King, strutting into our dull days with his train of Belgian cits at his heels, promised to afford us as much entertainment as we had any right to expect.

Our French neighbours, the officials and monopolists aforesaid, did not share our view of the situation. Now, as ever, they regarded the King and his actions with a portentous gravity. They tumbled over one another in excited groups, striving to get at the blocked telegraph-wires: they sent messages to Paris which might not unfittingly have heralded the return of a Napoleon; and the French Foreign Office, replying with voluminous instructions, turned about to hammer insistently at the doors of Downing Street. The ponderous and slow-moving British Government was hustled into something like nimbleness by the infectious agitation of its neighbour; and on a certain day Marie David de Mayréna received an intimation from a British official that he would not be permitted to make Singapore or any other of her Majesty's dominions the base of his operations. He replied in a letter signed *Marie, Roi*, that he sought only to return to the land of the Sedangs, that the throne of

that country was his by right, and that he *forbade* any one to interfere with him. He was thereupon informed that if he attempted to take any action hostile to the French Government, while he remained on British soil, his arrest would follow with lightning-like rapidity.

Then, probably for the first time in all his days, Marie, the King, lost his nerve. He recalled to mind the death-warrant, which he believed to be lying concealed in the bureaux of Saigon; he remembered the well-known perfidy of Albion; he saw himself a political personage of the first importance, menacing France with his colossal hand while she crouched for the spring; he thought of all these things, and the more he meditated upon them the more certain did it appear to him that France would be prepared to pay any price for his surrender, and that England, perfidious and commercial as of old, would sell him to his enemies without scruple. The only reason why his arrest was delayed, he told himself, lay in the fact that the Government of the Nation of Shopkeepers was bent upon driving a bargain, knowing full well the value of the prize they held in their hands; and if France were in the end forced to pay a heavy price for him, she would be all the more sure to get her money's worth when he was delivered safely into her grip. The whole of the King's speculations were based upon an extravagant estimate of his own importance;

and this in its turn was due to an ingrained weakness in his character, against which the arguments of his friends broke impotently like waves on a rocky shore. Of a sudden, without even warning his Belgian followers, and taking no one with him save only his Prime Minister, Marie the First, King of the Sedangs, fled from Singapore to the little island of Tioman in the China Sea, where, since Pahang, to which it belongs, is a British Protectorate and not a colony, he deemed himself to be secure.

Were a man in search of a lovely and secluded paradise in which to lay him down to rest his tired bones, he could find few spots upon this earth more suited to his purpose than the island upon which the King now took up his abode. From the blue ripples of the China Sea the land runs upward, in undulating slopes, till the summit of the mountain, which is the heart of the island, is reached. The heavy Malayan jungle, a closely-woven warp and woof of greenery, covers all the land, and fringes the sides of the twin peaks which crown the whole. The ugly difference between the Occidental and the Oriental points of view is exemplified strikingly in the names which these peaks bear in the jargon of the British seamen and in the language of the Malayan fisher-folk respectively. The white man looking at the island, as his steamer ploughs and lurches past it, can find no more appropriate name to give to the lovely mountain than that

of the Ass's Ears ; the fisherman, gazing up at it out of eyes grown wise from looking nature in the face, and filled with a childlike faith in the marvels of old-world legends, names it the Dragon's Horns.

On the eastern side of the island, at a spot where the ruddy dawn paints a lane of light along a vast stretch of uninterrupted sea, there lies a tiny bay, tucked snugly away between two rocky headlands. The sand is almost white, dazzling to look upon, and strewn with marvellous shells. Fifty yards inland the fronds of the coconut palms nod gracefully over the thatched roofs of a village ; and all about the beach fishing-boats, nets, and tackle lie in the sunlight, bearing testimony to the manner in which the Tioman folk earn their scanty livelihood. No stranger visits this bay from year's end to year's end ; and the villagers are born, and love, and marry, and are laid to rest under the *súdu* plants without having experience of any fuller, wider life than that which their island-home affords.

This was the place in which the hunted King sought refuge, building for himself a hut at a little distance from the Malay habitations, and paying royally for all he got with coins of gold such as the natives had never seen before.

The Headman of Tioman was much exercised in mind at the arrival of this white man, who in broken Malay told all who came to see him that he was a

king in his own country, and that a tyrannical European Government was keeping him out of his rights. The Headman made haste to Pěkan, the capital of Pahang, and laid his trouble and his perplexity before his own Sultan.

“Behold, O King,” he said; “this man who hath come to dwell among us is passing strange. He hath the appearance of a white man; but his hair is not white (*viz.* “fair”), as is the manner of the white men’s hair, but black like unto our own, and his eyes also are black. He is a *wrong* sort of white man, having much that is black about him. Moreover he is not Inggris [English], and yet when thy servant did ask him whether therefore he were a son of a Pranchis [French] behold his eyes waxed red, and he spat upon the ground making answer with curses very pungent and terrifying that the sons of the Pranchis were his enemies. And in like manner he denieth that he is the son of a Blanda [Hollander, Dutchman]. Verily, thy servant opines that he is a very *wrong* kind of white man having much that is black about him, lacking birth-place and countrymen, and moreover he is of the faith, a Muhammadan, and no Infidel as are other white folk.”

The Sultan referred the matter to his Resident, the problem being one which he found himself unable to solve; and the Resident sent instructions to a young District Officer, who dwelt on the coast some

hundred miles distant from Pëkan and from other Europeans, bidding him visit Tioman, see the King, and report the result.

So Fortescue (as I will call the District Officer) got into the crank little sailing-boat, in which he was accustomed to risk his life twenty times a month on the restless waters of the China Sea, and sailed across to Tioman. He arrived there when the sun was sinking behind the Dragon's Horns, and went ashore alone to talk with the King. As he approached the little house, which the King dignified with the name of *La Maison du Roi*, Fortescue perceived that the place was stoutly barricaded, and that two or three shining gun-barrels protruded their snouts from loopholes cut in the shutters, and were trained carefully on to him. Being a young Englishman of the right sort, Fortescue walked calmly up to the house, for nerves he had none, and rapped upon the closed shutters with his walking-stick. "*Monseigneur le Roi*," he called out gaily, "have the goodness to open the door."

The hirsute visage of the King showed itself for a moment at a crack in the wooden shutters, and grinned with many teeth at the young Englishman. "You are a brave man, friend," he said in French. "You are brave, and courage we admire, we love. Figure to yourself, we expect an army, and see 'tis only a child that comes to us. Enter, enter!"

So Fortescue was made welcome, and he and the King and the King's Prime Minister, Monsieur B., feasted on the simple fare of the island, that had doubtless been purchased with the ten-franc pieces (supplied by the Belgian cits for quite other purposes) which the King was engaged in scattering broadcast among the astonished fisher-folk of Tioman.

After dinner Fortescue had much business talk with the King, and gave him to understand very explicitly that the Government of Pahang would not suffer his Majesty to make Tioman a base of operations against the French, and the King gave his word, —*parole d'honneur d'un roi*—not to abuse the hospitality of the land that had given him refuge by going counter to the wishes of his hosts in this respect.

He took an immense liking to the handsome young Englishman, and the latter was greatly impressed by the extraordinary personality of the King. Therefore, the twain made fast friends, and on that night, and on many a subsequent occasion, they sat talking together far into the small hours, while the Prime Minister snored in peace upon his mat in the adjoining room. The King's past held many memories worth recounting, and he had a dramatist's eye for an artistic effect. When he dwelt upon the days in which he was struggling to obtain the mastery over the wild tribes of the Sedangs, he had many hairbreadth escapes to narrate.

“Once, too, I had to face not savages, but my own countrymen. There is a law prohibiting all men from bringing munitions of war into the *Hinterland* of Annam. That law, I defied it! I spat upon it! Not once but many times did I bring gunpowder in plenty, for I needed it in my strife with my enemies. The Administration tried to prevent me. I mocked myself of the Administration. I brought gunpowder, and more gunpowder, and again gunpowder. At last the Administration gets word that on a certain day I go inland and that much gunpowder is in my possession. They pursue. I fly, stomach on the ground, for I care much for the gunpowder; but I weep, for it is bitter to me to avoid my enemies. They pursue, stomach likewise on the ground. My *cochons d'indigènes* who port my gunpowder are hit with fear. They see the Administration which arrives. They disembarass themselves of their loads. They fly. Figure to yourself! I am alone, I enrage myself. I light fire, I seize a torch, I make explode the gunpowder; then I too fly, and I save myself, and again I mock myself of the Administration! But at what cost, my friend! See then!”

He bared his right arm, and slipped his loose coat from off his shoulder. All up his arm and far into the fell of his chest there spread a horrible bluish scar, telling unmistakably of the awful injury that this determined man had deliberately inflicted upon himself,

rather than suffer his beloved gunpowder to fall into the hands of the Administration that he so passionately hated.

Shortly after the King had taken up his residence on Tioman, a small, rotund, very hot, and exceedingly angry gentleman, in a faded frock-coat, came to Pëkan, and sought an interview with the Resident. It appeared that he was no less a person than the Minister of Public Justice in the kingdom of the Sedangs, and he visited Pëkan as the emissary and spokesman of the other Belgian officials whom the King had left in Singapore, with only a very few half-franc pieces between the lot of them. He came, as befitted his high office, to seek for justice,—justice against the King of the Sedangs. He had a pitiful tale to tell, for when they found themselves penniless in a foreign land, the Belgian gentlemen had addressed a memorial to the King and to his Prime Minister at Tioman, pointing out that their loyalty to the former had placed them in a position of extreme embarrassment, that they had hitherto obtained little but ridicule from those to whom they had applied for help, and that, in view of the fact that the King was the cause of all their woe, it was only right that he should furnish them with the means wherewith to defray the cost of their passages back to Belgium. The King, who, with all his faults, was not lacking in a sense of humour where other folk were concerned, had replied to this petition through

Monsieur B., his Prime Minister, in a letter decked with a royal coat of arms, and bearing the address of *La Maison du Roi, Tioman*. This letter stated, in courtly and official phraseology, that it was with infinite regret that his Majesty learned that his trusted followers had, through the tyranny of France and the treachery of Great Britain, suffered any inconvenience or annoyance. He had noted their request for funds, and was desolated to have to inform them that, in view of the present financial position of the treasury of the kingdom of the Sedangs, he found himself wholly unable to comply with a request so reasonable; but, having regard to their well-known loyalty to his person, and the value of the services which they had performed for the State of Sedang, he had much pleasure in acquainting them with his resolution to raise each one of them one grade in the Service of which he was himself the Head. Thus the General would become a Field-Marshal, the Minister of Public Justice a Lord High Chancellor, and so on. I think that I can see the King and his Minister chuckling heartily as they concocted this most delightful of all State-papers.

To the little Belgian who repeated the gist of this document to the almost convulsed Resident, however, the humour of the affair, as was perhaps natural, appealed not at all. Indeed, the memory of this reply from the King caused the excellent Minister of

Public Justice to writhe with rage and impotence, while in his fury he executed a sort of frenzied war-dance on the verandah of the Residency. But the document of agreement, under which the Belgian gentlemen bound themselves to forego all claims for pay until such time as they had arrived in safety in the land of the Sedangs, made it impossible for them to establish any case against the King's Most Excellent Majesty, and the Minister of Public Justice, still dancing with rage, and perspiring as he danced, returned sadly to Singapore, whence he and his fellows were presently shipped back to Belgium before the mast, sadder but wiser men.

Some months slipped by after this incident, and the King continued to dwell in peace on the island of Tioman; but his mind, restless and eager as of old, was for ever devising plans whose object was to effect his return to the land of the Sedangs. He had now grown strangely suspicious, and in every ship's captain who offered to carry him up the coast, and put him ashore at some point whence he might make his way disguised into his own territories, the King saw an emissary of the French or the British Government. He had with him the costume of a Roman Catholic missionary, and when he assumed it, he was altogether indistinguishable from one of those brave and bearded priests. That a member of the great *Société des missions Étrangères* should be found wandering alone through a strange land could not possibly

excite suspicion, since no tribes are too wild, no country too difficult, no places too unsavoury for these self-sacrificing clergy. Had the King been able to overcome his fears of treachery, and had he accepted one of the many offers made to him by the masters of the coasting steamers, there can be little doubt that the Sedangs would shortly have been gladdened by the presence of their King once more in their midst.

But for any such scheme money was necessary, and all the King's funds were lying at a bank in Singapore. He dared not visit that place in person, and at last, after much communing with himself and with Auguste, his half-bred, mangy, flesh-coloured French poodle, who was more dear to the King than any other being on earth, he decided to send Monsieur B. to Singapore with full powers to withdraw the whole of his balance at the bank. Monsieur B. set off accordingly, promising a speedy return, and the King, with Auguste for company, strode up and down the sandy beach at Tioman, now sunken in deep thought, now haranguing the waves with shouts and gesticulations, now talking confidentially to Auguste, planning, plotting, dreaming dreams, fighting imaginary enemies, and waiting anxiously for the return of his messenger. But alas, Monsieur B. never returned to Tioman. The money was drawn out of the bank, as had been arranged, but Monsieur B. disappeared, and the

money with him. Perhaps the dead monotony of life at Tioman had proved too much for his nerves; perhaps the insufferable airs which the King often assumed towards him had turned his love and loyalty to hatred; or, perhaps, the tinkling tune of merry Paris, far away across the sea,—merry indeed for one with much good money in his pockets—proved too alluring for Monsieur B.'s powers of resistance and self-denial. Also, he may have told himself that the money was as much his own as it was the King's, or at any rate that he had as good a right to it as had any one,—save only the Belgian folk who, simple souls, had supplied it in the beginning.

The news of what had occurred was brought to the King by three Frenchmen who lolled up the coast in a native fishing-boat, which they had fitted up as a sort of yacht for the purpose of a summer cruise. And thus the King learned that his last chance had failed him. He was at the end of his tether; his stock of ready money was running low, and when that was exhausted he would have no means of obtaining food or raiment. He was friendless and alone on a little island in the China Sea, and he dared not make a dash for Singapore, lest that order for his execution, in which he so firmly believed, should at last be used against him. On the night upon which the King received this news, he left his guests sleeping in the bungalow beneath the coco-nut fronds, and accompanied

by Auguste, roamed up and down the beach until the sky was reddening for the dawn. Who shall say what melancholy musings were his during that lonely vigil, what long past dreams rose up to mock him, what pain, and anger, and bitterness, and grief came that night to rend his heart-strings?

But daylight found him calm, courteous to his visitors, gay in his speech, brave and determined as of old. Later the King and his three friends sailed across to Rompin on the mainland, where Fortescue had his home, and the party quartered itself on the young Englishman, who so rarely saw a white face that any visitors were welcome.

On the following morning the King drew up his will, and executed it formally in the presence of Fortescue, who was a magistrate. Then he called Auguste, and the two went out into the blazing sunshine for a stroll. Presently the King came running back in a state of great excitement, crying to Fortescue that he had been bitten by a snake. There was a small puncture in his leg, such as might have been made by a hypodermic syringe. Everything that was possible in that remote place was done to save him, but, though no convulsions set in such as are the usual accompaniment of death by snake-bite, in an hour and a half the King of the Sedangs had "passed to where beyond these voices there is peace."

He left the land, which his strong right hand had

won, as a legacy to the Emperor William, but no claim has, I believe, ever been put forward from Berlin with a view to giving effect to this bequest. The Muhammadan priests and elders came at Fortescue's summons, for such was the King's dying request, and his body was prepared for burial after the manner of the followers of the Prophet. And so the frail casing of flesh and bone which had held that restless soul, was laid to sleep beneath the *súdu*-plants and the spear-grass in the little quiet graveyard of an obscure Malayan village; and no headstone or inscription serves to mark the last resting-place of the man whose only cause of failure lay in the fact that he was born into the world in an age which holds that knight-errants and dauntless adventurers are absurd anachronisms undeserving of the sympathy of respectable people.

But if you chance to visit Tioman (it lies some eight thousand weary miles away from Hyde Park Corner), the natives of the place will point out to you a number of strange-looking quadrupeds, half-pariah, half-poodle, and with pride will inform you that these are "*ánjing pranchis*" (French dogs); and these uncouth descendants of the well-beloved and redoubtable Auguste are the only traces left upon this little fairy island marking it as the erstwhile refuge of Marie David de Mayréna, Comte de Ray, and King of the Sedangs.



WRECKAGE OF EMPIRE

"They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshýd gloried and drank deep :
And Bahrám, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep."

—FITZGERALD.

WHEN, in October, 1902, the gentlemen of England read in their morning newspapers that M. Delcassé and the Siamese special commissioner, Phya Sri Sahadheb, had been putting their heads together in Paris, and had evolved a convention restoring to Siam the provinces of Batambang and Siam-Reap, and ceding to France the shores of the great lake of Tonli-Sap, to how many among them, I wonder, did these names convey anything in the nature of a definite impression? An examination of the map sufficed to convince the curious that such places had an actual existence, packed away somewhere at the back of beyond in the vast *Hinterland* of Indo-China—that they were not mere geographical Mrs. Harrises—and with this rudimentary information, I conceive, the majority of English readers remained perfectly contented. Not one in ten thousand, it is probable, experienced the

faintest thrill at the sound of these outlandish names, yet the districts for which they stand, wrested once by Siam from the tottering kingdom of Kamboja, from the Siamese by the French, and now to be restored again to Siam by Kamboja's European conquerors, or "protectors," have a power to fire the imagination, to stir the pulses of the most sluggish, such as is possessed in equal degree by few lands even in Asia, the mother of mystery and of marvel, the owner of the longest and least amply recorded of human histories.

Ascending the valley of the Mekong, for a matter of 170 miles from the sea, the traveller comes presently to the town of Pnom-Penh. It is situated near the spot where the branch of the great lake mingles its waters with those of the river, and where the huge delta has its beginning. It was formerly a mere huddle of thatched houses and hovels, but since the French protectorate over Kamboja was declared in 1863, many changes have been wrought. The church, and the *café chantant* facing it, which, according to the popular saying on the Outskirts, are the first traces of French civilisation in a conquered land, have here been succeeded by trim quays, rows of glaring white buildings, wide streets straight as so many dyes, little tables set under the shade of awnings, flag-poles flaunting the tricolor, and all the other paraphernalia indispensable to a colony of France. Among these things there move restlessly the representatives of

that ubiquitous *Administration* whose feverish desire to "administer" every one and everything makes life in Indo-China well-nigh unendurable, and clogs the wheels of progress and prosperity.

All this is, as it were, the veneering imposed by the requirements of French civilisation upon the surface of the native town. Lift it and peer below, as you may easily do by quitting the ordered foreign quarter, and penetrating into the crowded rabbit-warrens wherein dwell the larger half of the 45,000 men and women who make up the native population of Pnom-Penh. Here may be seen the real Kamboja, such as it is in our own day, its people a spent and indolent folk, unambitious of better things, content with themselves, scornfully contemptuous of the foreigners, and filled with a fanatical detestation of alien religions such as is but rarely entertained by the votaries of Buddhism. France has given to them a freedom from oppression which they never formerly enjoyed, but they are not in the least grateful. The present to them is a degradation, let its conditions be what they may; to them the future is hopeless, for they have within them a consciousness of no power of recovery or rebound. Only the past remains—the great past, its story half-lost in the mazes of fable and tradition, which yet has left the echo of a memory so tremendous that by comparison all things else are dwarfed and pitifully feeble.

Leave Phnom-Penh behind you, with its contrasts of new alien birth and pathetic indigenous decay, and pass up into the great lake of Tonli-Sap. The waters of this inland sea are of an extent so vast that the shore may be completely lost to sight, but so often as it is recovered it is found always clothed in one immense tangle of forest—such forest as only the hot, moist tropic soil can produce—out of which, here and there, is nicked the space for a mean fishing-hamlet. None the less, many of the people are Kambojans; there is no mistaking the fine straight features, distinctively Hindu in type, which offer a contrast so startling to the flat noses, the narrow eyes, and the broad, expressionless, Mongolian faces of their neighbours of Annam, of China and of Siam. Yet these men herd together in rickety huts, living in dirt, in poverty and in squalor, forgetful of the vanished greatness of their race, and possessing a civilisation every whit as debased as that of the peasantry of any of these lands of south-eastern Asia.

And a realisation of what that greatness must have been breaks upon you suddenly, for landing at the northern extremity of the lake, and following the narrow footpath, or forcing your way through the clustering underwood, you find yourself abruptly, without a moment's preparation, brought face to face with the Titanic ruins of a once mighty empire. On the one hand is the huge town of Angkor Thôm,

enclosed by a wall over twenty feet in height and half as many feet in thickness, covering an area of twenty-four square miles, crowded with palaces, pagodas, treasure-houses, noble halls, and spacious dwellings, yet shrouded within and without by forest so dense that a vast building is often invisible at a distance of twenty feet! On the other hand Angkor Wat, the magnificent ruined Buddhist temple, rears its domes high above the tree-tops, its base measuring over three miles about within the deep fosses, a temple so impressive that Mouhot, the first European to describe it in detail, wrote of it that "a rival to that of Solomon, and erected by some ancient Michael Angelo, it might take an honourable place beside our most beautiful buildings, and is grander than anything left to us by Greece or Rome!" Between Angkor Thôm and Angkor Wat is the pagoda of Mount Bakhêng, the oldest, most dilapidated, and least perfectly fashioned of the ruins, and beyond the mean thatched houses of the modern town of Siam-Reap, dominated by its erstwhile Siamese fort, is yet another pagoda, perched on the summit of a solitary hill, and hidden by a dense grove—the temple of Mount Krôm.

The gigantic size of these ruins alone suffices to impress the imagination, but the wealth and wonderful detail of their ornamentation is even more striking. They are fashioned for the most part of immense rectangular blocks of sandstone or ferruginous rock, brought

from quarries distant some five-and-twenty miles, and these are fitted together with so nice an accuracy that the joins between block and block are as straight as though they had been ruled. No cement or mortar were used, and upon the precise fitting of each separate fragment depended the soundness of the edifices which have so triumphantly resisted the ravages of time. Almost every block is curiously carved, is covered with bas-reliefs executed with delicacy and finish, representing processions of warriors mounted on lions, dragons, birds and fabulous monsters, kings with their wives and women, combats between the apes and the angels, soldiers armed with bows, and halberts, and sabres, and javelins, mothers at play with their little ones, and hundreds of scenes historical, legendary, or domestic. Inscriptions too are found, some in an archaic character which is unknown even to the Buddhist monks, who in Kamboja represent the learned and lettered class; some in a writing of more modern type, which nearly resembles the script in use among the Kambojans of to-day. The latter consist only of prayers, invocations and religious formulæ, of no historical or archæological interest; the former are still a sealed book, though some which are believed to have been interpreted with accuracy indicate that one or more of the less ancient of the Khmer buildings date from the second century of our era. A detailed description of the ruins of Angkor—and similar ruins, though on a somewhat

less grandiose scale, are found scattered through the province of Batambang, through most of Kamboja and in many parts of Laos—would fill a goodly volume, and nothing of the kind can be attempted here. All that is desired is to give to the reader some general idea of the vastness of the buildings, of the magnificence of their architectural conception, and of the dignity, the delicacy, and the finished art with which that conception was executed. This has perhaps been already achieved, and I will not insist further upon the labyrinth of galleries, the countless flights of stairways, the arches, the domes, the bridges, the statues of kings, and gods, and demons, and monsters, the immense Causeway of Giants, which leads to the main gate of Angkor Thôm, nor yet upon the paralysing shock of wonder which the discovery of these tremendous monuments conveys to one who lights upon them, deserted, almost forgotten, in the heart of the wilderness, “here at the quiet limits of the world.” My object is to speculate, not upon the ruins, but upon the hidden story which they veil; not upon Angkor as it is, but upon Angkor as it was, and upon the events which led to its abandonment to the forest and the wild things of the jungle.

The existence of these ruins was first made known to Europeans by Christoval de Jaque, whose book, published in 1606, gives an account of his travels in Indo-China between 1592 and 1598. He calls the

place Anjog, states that it was discovered by the Portuguese in 1570, gives a recognisable description of many of its most salient features, and mentions the important fact that the inscriptions could not be deciphered even at that period by the natives of the country.

In 1611, Ribadeneyra writes in his history of the Islands of the Archipelago: "There are in Cambodgia the ruins of an ancient city, which some say was constructed by the Romans or by Alexander the Great. It is a marvellous fact that none of the natives can live in these ruins, which are the resort of wild beasts." In spite of the naïve European tendency here revealed to attribute everything great to the white civilisations of ancient times, this passage contains two facts of importance—that the Kambojans believed in the "marvellous fact" that they could not live in Angkor, and that even at the time of its discovery by the Portuguese the place was given over to the forest and to the beasts of the wilderness. Since that day the notices contained in the works of travellers of the great Khmer ruins are numerous, but with them we need not now concern ourselves. The ruins were ruins just as they are to-day in the year 1570, and that in our present enquiry is a fact of cardinal importance.

As good fortune will have it, there is extant an account of the capital of Kamboja, as it was before its abandonment, written by an independent witness,

and from it much is to be learned. This is contained in a work from the pen of an anonymous Chinese diplomat, who in 1295—the year that Marco Polo arrived in Venice, after spending more than a decade and a half in Cathay—received instructions from Kublai Kaan to proceed to Kamboja, there to promulgate certain orders of the great Emperor. He started, he tells us, in the following year, travelling by the sea-route; was delayed by contrary winds after he arrived off the coast of Cochinchina, and did not reach the capital of the Khmer King until the fifth month following his departure from the Chinese port of Wen-Chu. He returned to his own country in 1297. A full translation of the text of his work may be found by those curious in such matters in M. Abel Rémusat's *Nouveaux Mélanges Asiatiques*, but for our own purpose only a few of the facts which it contains need here be noted. A *li*, as all who have read that admirable book *Chinese Characteristics* are aware, is a lineal measure which possesses very elastic properties, no two districts or even villages, hardly one might say any two Chinamen, agreeing as to the length of the unit, a further complication being introduced by the distance between two points along one and the same road counting as so many *li* when the traveller is descending a slope, and so many additional *li* when he retraces his footsteps with the gradient against him. In these circumstances, therefore, nothing in the nature of a very accurate

notion of the size of the Kambojan capital is to be gathered from the fact that the Chinese Ambassador begins by stating that it measures twenty *li* in circumference, but we may conclude that he intended to convey the impression that it covered a considerable area. The gates of the town, their number and position, he describes with more exactness, and he makes special mention of the great Causeway of the Giants which, as we have already seen, leads to the principal portal of the city of Angkor. "On each side of the bridge," he writes, "there are fifty-four stone statues representing divinities: they are very great: they resemble," he beautifully adds, "statues of general-officers, and they have threatening countenances." He also speaks of nineheaded dragons, the remains of which are such a peculiar feature of the Angkor statuary, and in this connection he relates the following curious myth concerning one of the towers of the royal palace.

"Several natives of distinguished rank have told me that formerly there used to be a fairy in that tower in the form of a dragon with nine heads, who was the protectress of the kingdom; that under the reign of each King of the country the fairy took every night the form of a woman, and sought the King in the tower; and, even though he were married, the Queen, his wife, dared not intrude before a certain hour; but, at a signal of two strokes, the fairy vanished, and the King was then able to receive his Queen and his other wives; if the fairy allowed a single night to

pass without appearing, it was a sign that the death of the King was near at hand ; if, on his side, the King failed to meet her, it was certain that a fire or some other calamity would occur."

A description of a pagoda without the walls, corresponding to that of Mount Bakhêng, is also given in the Chinese manuscript, and it is therein recorded that the people of Kamboja had a tradition that it had been built by one Lu-pan in the space of a single night. As has already been remarked, the pagoda of Mount Bakhêng has all the appearances of being the most ancient of the ruins, the work being of a ruder, less finished character than that of the more recent buildings. The latter would seem to be the ripened fruit of the art of the Khmers, while Mount Bakhêng is a product of its immaturity. The prevalence of the superstition concerning its origin, repeated by the Chinese author, would seem to indicate that even in the thirteenth century the history of its foundation had been forgotten.

The manuscript goes on to describe two small lakes in the neighbourhood of the capital, where only one lake is now found, and that not altogether in the position indicated by the Chinese Envoy ; but a much more inexplicable fact is the omission of all reference to the great temple of Angkor Wat. No name is given by the author to the town which he is describing, and the fact that Angkor Wat is completely

ignored, added to the further fact that lakes are located where no lakes now exist, has caused some writers to jump to the conclusion that the city which was visited by the Ambassador was some place other than Angkor Thôm. It is in truth impossible to account for the failure to make any mention of a structure so imposing as Angkor Wat, and it has been suggested that this, the least ancient of the ruins, had not been built at the time of the Chinaman's visit. The building itself, however, gives the lie to any such supposition, and the manuscript is silent on the subject of any great public works being in course of construction during the ambassador's stay in Kamboja. On the other hand, the account of the great walled town, of its gates, and above all, of the Causeway of the Giants, seems to me to point conclusively to the fact that Angkor Thôm itself is the Kambojan capital which this work describes, and we can only infer that the author failed to write of Angkor Wat, just as Marco Polo omitted all reference to the Great Wall of China, although he had passed seventeen years of his life in far Cathay. That there are other vast Khmer ruins scattered about Indo-China is well known, and all of them have now been visited by Europeans, but nowhere have remains been brought to light which fit the account given in the Chinese work as do the ruins of Angkor Thôm, the greatest of the Kambojan cities.

The inscriptions, moreover, seem to support the contention that Angkor Wat must have been in existence long before the visit of the Chinese Envoy, for on the walls of this temple both the ancient and the more modern script is found. In Asia every priesthood has inclined to the use of a peculiar language of religion, and one which was not generally understood of the people; whence it is probable that the more archaic character was the script of such a tongue, and that the later inscriptions were carved at a period long subsequent when the ancient learning had passed into oblivion. If this be so, the presence of the ancient inscriptions on the stones of Angkor Wat, which I would repeat is the least ancient of the ruins, would show that even this temple was erected in very ancient times, and certainly long anterior to the thirteenth century of our era.

I have drawn attention to the fact that no mention is made in the Chinese manuscript of any great works being in progress at the time of its author's visit to Kamboja, nor, having regard to what we know of the history of the Khmers, should we expect any such manifestation of energy to be then apparent. Buildings on a scale such as this must have claimed the lifelong services of thousands of men. They can only have been conceived by a race instinct with vitality, mental and physical, can only have been executed by a people possessed by a passionate love of art for its

own sake, a people who were able to expend upon their achievement infinite ingenuity, patience, skill, devotion, and a vast amount of treasure. They must also have been a nation so strong that they had no fear of enemies, no rival whose invasions threatened them, and thus were free to devote to their artistic creations all the energy which, in circumstances less fortunate, would have been required for conquest or for defence. Works such as these were never yet produced by a race whose king occupied the humble position of a mere vassal, yet we know that the kingdom of Kamboja was conquered by China about the beginning of our era, and was actually subject to her until the conclusion of the tenth century, while up to a much later date a nominal suzerainty was admitted, and sealed by the payment of a periodical tribute. It is only reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the Khmer civilisation reached its height, and Khmer art its culmination, at a period prior to the subjection of the kingdom to the Chinese, and this would throw the date of the ruins of Angkor back to the first or second century B.C. at the very latest.

Thenceforth, the energy which had made the creation of such gigantic monuments of art a possibility declined. Unsuccessful war and, it may be, the ravages of pestilence, must have caused the numbers of the Khmer nation to dwindle, for in our own day, after a long period of comparative peace,

only 1,300,000 Kambojans, who can claim descent from their great forefathers, are found in Indo-China. The monuments themselves bear witness also to the decay of the people. The use of the more modern character in the later inscriptions would appear to indicate a decline in the ancient learning of the Khmers before all their skill and delight in art had deserted them, but the number of unfinished carvings and of buildings which have never quite reached completion is even more eloquent of *décadence*. This surely betokens that the plastic arts were becoming lost secrets before ever the ruins were abandoned; that what the men of one generation had begun, the men of the generations which succeeded it were powerless to carry on; and also, it may be inferred, that such energy as still remained to the Khmer people was needed, every atom of it, for the maintenance of their national independence. Later came the age during which they were the vassals of China, and the once proud and mighty empire, thrust by circumstances into so pitiful a position of dependence, would have but little heart for creation of an artistic character, and would live upon the memory of what had been, without attempting to rival past achievements in the present, and without any spark of hope for the future.

This, I imagine, must have been the condition of the Khmer people when the Chinese Envoy visited

their capital at the end of the thirteenth century ; but when Angkor was discovered by the Portuguese in 1570, the place, as we have seen, was already a ruin overgrown with jungle, the centre, round which clustered a thousand inconsequent superstitions, the shrine in which a dead empire lay buried so securely that hardly a whisper concerning its story had filtered down to its own degenerate children. To the European, used only to the conditions of his own continent, it appears at first sight an obvious impossibility that if Angkor Thôm were an inhabited town in 1297, it could, in the space of less than two hundred years, have become, not only a wilderness, but also, as it were, a myth to which clung the veriest rags of reliable tradition. This view has impressed itself so strongly upon various writers, that they have been driven to explain away the great walled town described by the Chinese author, and to declare roundly that the Khmer civilisation could not conceivably have died out in this fashion in so paltry a period of time. But the Chinese manuscript is authentic, detailed, exact. It gives dates and facts which cannot be got over : it declines absolutely to be ignored. The truth seems to me to be established past all gainsaying that Angkor Thôm is the town described, and that that place was inhabited in 1297, and was a deserted ruin in 1570 ; nor, to me, the East being what it is, and Orientals being what they are, does this appeal as impossible, or even unlikely.

The citations which have been made from the works of early visitors to Angkor supply two hints which, perhaps, will serve to explain the whole mystery. Ribadeneyra noted in 1611 the "marvellous fact" that the natives could not live in the ruins, which would seem to indicate a superstitious belief that the ancient Khmer buildings were, for some unexplained reason, uninhabitable by human beings. The Chinese author speaks of lakes where no lakes now exist. From these two statements something like a working hypothesis may be evolved. Great physical changes wrought in the natural features of the surrounding landscape could only be caused by earthquakes, and the dilapidation of some of the buildings lends confirmation to this supposition; yet the earthquake shocks, if earthquake shocks there were, must have been slight, or at any rate insufficiently strong utterly to overthrow the solid walls and the domes of many of the pagodas. Imagine, then, a series of slight earthquake shocks, occurring at a period when the Khmer people, though still dwelling in the mighty city which their ancestors had erected, had declined from their former eminence, had lost the energy which they once possessed in such overflowing measure, had become *décadents* in their arts and culture—when, in a word, they had learned to regard themselves as a people doomed and ruined—and then try to conceive what effect these seismic convulsions would be like to have

upon a sensitive, fearful, and imaginative Oriental race. To them the rockings of the solid ground would be the very voice of the gods—their irresistible Will become suddenly and awfully articulate. The Asiatic differs from the Occidental in nothing more radically than in his ability, his avidity of belief, his power to grasp that belief, and to *realise* it as white men realise only the force of patent, indisputable fact. If once the conclusion that the gods were determined that the great city should no longer harbour its inhabitants had impressed itself upon the popular mind, no consideration of interest, no love of property, no affection born of long association, no clinging to the flesh-pots, no reluctance to abandon things very precious, very ancient, and very sacred would serve to stay an exodus. The dried-up bed of a great lake which Francis Garnier discovered to the north of Angkor, when he was travelling south from Ubon, is additional evidence supporting the theory of earthquake; and given this outward and visible sign of the anger of the gods, and an appreciation of the character of an Oriental populace, we have a working explanation which may account for the abandonment by the Kambojans of all their ancient cities.

Imagine a people, already far gone in its decline, driven forth into the wilderness by the inexplicable caprice of the gods, lacking the numbers, the energy, the skill, and the genius which had belonged to it in

its prime, cowed utterly by "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," and with no Moses for leader and lawgiver. The first necessity in this land of sun-glare and torrential rains would be to obtain some shelter from the elements, and the jungle spreading away on every side would furnish ample material for the building of huts, made of timber and thatched with palm-leaves, such as the Kambojans use to-day. It would not present itself to this fallen people even as a possibility to emulate the great works wrought by their forebears. What would it profit them to build if the caprice of the gods might once more drive them forth? Moreover, the ample resources which had formerly been at the disposal of their Kings would have vanished with their ancient greatness. Descent is proverbially easy, and the substitution of the squalid hut for the splendid stone palace would be readily made, and would be no more than symbolical of the corresponding decline in the prevailing standard of civilisation before and after the exodus. No great effort of fancy, therefore, is necessary in order to picture the rapid degeneration which would overtake these people when once they had slipped the anchor of association that had bound them to the past, and being now scattered over the country, exposed to the persecutions of their stronger neighbours of Siam and Annam, a nation no longer save in name, such learning as had once belonged to them would pass into oblivion, and very

speedily even the story of their ancient greatness would become a myth. The extraordinary change in the condition of the Kambojans which is to be noted if we compare the work of the Chinese Envoy, writing in 1297, and the earliest Portuguese chroniclers at the end of the sixteenth century,—a change which had been wrought within a space of less than two hundred years—marvellous as it is, becomes when examined in the light of the hypothesis here suggested, neither inexplicable, nor, as some have averred, a sheer impossibility.

The evidence supporting the belief in a general and more or less sudden exodus having occurred, is ample. If the Khmer towns had been depopulated by pestilence, it is certain that human remains in large numbers would be found within the ruins, but for a matter of fact no such traces have been brought to light. If the place had been devastated by war, this calamity too would have left its sure and unmistakable signs; but though acts of iconoclasm may in places have been committed, the general appearance of the ruins leads to the conclusion that time and weather, rather than man and the rage of man, have here wrought destruction. The tradition of war too would most likely have survived, but no such event is spoken of by the modern Kambojans, and the theory of a voluntary exodus, due doubtless to superstitious fear, in itself a final symptom of the national decay, would

seem to be the explanation best adapted to the facts in our possession.

This theory, which has not, I believe, been hitherto advanced, has escaped attention, possibly because two facts, seemingly opposed to it, have bulked big in the sight of European investigators. The first is the complete ignorance of the modern Kambojans concerning the history of Angkor, and the cloud of myth and legend with which it is surrounded in the popular fancy; the second is the extent to which the ruins have been overgrown by apparently virgin forest. It is contended that neither of these things could have happened in the space of less than two centuries, and therefore the evidence of the Chinese Envoy has either been ignored, or has been twisted out of its obvious meaning and has been explained away.

For me, on the other hand, the testimony of the Chinaman, an independent and unbiassed witness, has its own peculiar value, nor do I see how it is possible to set it aside. I find myself, therefore, compelled to accept the recorded facts, that Angkor Thôm was inhabited in 1297, and had become a part of the wilderness by 1570; and this being so, I confess that the difficulties in the way of such a conclusion do not present themselves to me as in any sense insuperable. It must be borne in mind that the facts of ascertained history point to the decline of the Khmer civilisation extending over a matter of more than a dozen centuries

prior to the visit of the Chinese envoy, and that the more rapid decay which probably followed upon the exodus was only the continuation of a process that had been operative during an immense period. The Khmers exiled to the forests would be getting back very near to their primitive beginnings; their energies would be directed solely to maintaining life amid the new conditions; they would become scattered, as, indeed, they are in our own time; and the vast majority being always unlettered, even such learning as they had preserved from the heyday of their greatness would quickly pass from them. The shortness of memory among an illiterate people is remarkable, and in Asia the natural propensity of the Oriental mind to cling to things strange and marvellous, contrives to weave a maze of fancy round the soberest historical facts. Among the Malays of the Peninsula, for example, the warrior Hang Tûah, who fought against the Portuguese in 1511, was beaten by them, and, subsequently, for many years carried on an intermittent and unsuccessful war against their growing power, had become, before two centuries had elapsed, a hero of fable as mythical as Hector or Achilles. It is much, as John Crawford said, as though our own Sir Walter Raleigh were to have become a myth! Instances of the same kind might be multiplied indefinitely, and this in lands where the European element has been constantly present to record, remember, and remind.

Given the peculiar conditions which must have prevailed among the Kambojans after the exodus, and the impressive character of the ruins abandoned to the forest, it is easy to comprehend that in a hundred years all manner of traditions concerning them would have found credence with an imaginative Oriental people. Among them the actual facts relating to their abandonment would easily become obscured and be eventually forgotten, but the knowledge that Angkor Thôm had once been the capital of Kambojan Kings would survive, as it has survived, and the superstitious tradition that the place was uninhabitable by human beings would remain, as it has remained.

The encroachment of the forest is a difficulty apparent rather than actual. Protected by superstitious fears, the ruins would during one or more generations be barely visited after their abandonment, and in the tropics, where the foot of man does not fall constantly, repeatedly, the jungle claims its own with a marvellous rapidity. In August, 1892, I spent some days on the edge of a large clearing, ten acres or more in extent, the whole of which was under plough, though no seed had been planted. This was in the Malay Peninsula, and owing to the disturbed state of the district that clearing was abandoned. In July, 1894, not quite two years later, I visited the same place, and found it covered with dense bush, most of it fourteen feet in height, and the whole of it so thick

that a way could only be forced through it by hewing a path with a wood-knife. Imagine that patch of clearing left untrodden, not for two, but for five score years, and then ask yourself whether the existence of seemingly virgin forest where the ploughed land had once been, would, in the circumstances, occasion any surprise. No one who has himself observed the rapidity with which forest encroaches in a tropical country need be astonished that the ruins of Angkor are overgrown with jungle. The wonder is that Nature has not well-nigh obliterated even these Titanic works of man, and that this has not been accomplished is additional testimony in support of the belief that the abandonment of Angkor occurred at a comparatively recent date.

To sum up: I contend that the facts at our disposal warrant the belief that Angkor Thôm was an inhabited city at the end of the thirteenth century; that by 1570—and concerning this there is no question—it was ruined and overgrown with forest, as it is to-day; that, some time in the fourteenth century, it is probable, a general exodus took place; and that this was due, not to pestilence nor to war, but to the conviction, fostered it is most likely by a succession of earthquake shocks, that it was the will of the gods that the ancient city should be evacuated.

Asia is the home of mystery, of tragedy, and of the pathos of things impotent and pitiful in decay;

but in all the sad East nothing, I think, is more wonderful than the lost story of the Khmers, nothing more tragic than their decline from the immense heights to which they once aspired, uplifted on the wings of genius, nothing more pathetic than the squalid Kambojans of our own time, a people spent and inert, who, wandering through the great forest aisles, incurious and indolent, haunt like shadowy ghosts the crumbling monuments of a mighty empire.



“A HUNGRY HEART”

“I am become a name ;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known ; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honoured of them all.”

Ulysses.

THE scientific age in which we live (and how we contrive to *live* is, in the circumstances, a marvel) brings tidings to us almost daily of the discovery of some new ill to which flesh is heir, yet few of these latter-day ailments are more genuine than that to which Mr. Kipling has been the first to give a convenient name. He calls it the “Go Fever,” and adds that it is twice as real as half the diseases to be found in the medical dictionaries. Yet, though the business of christening it has been left to an author of our own time, the thing itself is as old as the hills, or at any rate as the human race. The itch of travel is now to be allayed with ease and little hardship, for the world is spattered over with hotels and caravan-serai, is covered for the most part with a network of railway lines, and is girdled about and linked port to

port by the long wakes of innumerable ships. Here then is the remedy of the disease ready to the hand of any man who elects to make the necessary sacrifices of money, of time, or of labour; but it was otherwise in the Middle Ages, when the traveller went abroad at the peril of his head, and had to trust to primitive navigation, rudimentary transport, or to his own sturdy legs. Yet such is the insistent force of the malady, the mania—call it what you will—that even the appalling difficulties which faced him could not keep the victim of the “Go Fever” from wandering through a world which then indeed was wide; and of all the Brotherhood of Tramps no one among them is more deserving of undying fame than Abu Abd Allah Muhammad Ibn Abd Allah El Lawâti, familiarly known as Ibn Batuta, “The Traveller without peer of the whole Arab nation,” as he is affectionately called by a saint of his own faith.

With his name, perhaps, a small minority of educated Europeans is acquainted; his book has been read by the slender band of Arabic scholars, or by the still fewer students who are interested in the history of Asiatic exploration; but while Marco Polo stands for us pre-eminent as the most famous of the mediæval wanderers, Ibn Batuta, a greater than he, is persistently forgotten or ignored. This is doubtless due in part to the fact that he wrote in Arabic, and partly to the late discovery of his manuscript,

the very existence of which was not made known to Europeans until 1808. His achievements, however, are so extraordinary when we remember the facilities for travel at his command; his restlessness is so untameable; the naïve self-revelations which his story affords to us are so amusing; and he is withal such an entertaining *compagnon de voyage*, that his book is well worth reading for its own sake. It is with the hope, therefore, that I may induce a few to make themselves familiar with pages which otherwise might have escaped their attention, that I here propose to give a brief account of his wanderings, and of some of the remarkable experiences which fell to his lot, whereof he has preserved to us the record.

Ibn Batuta, then, was born in Tangier on February 24, 1304, and set out upon his travels from his native land in his twenty-first year. It was his original intention to go no further afield than Mecca—whither every good Muhammadan hopes to pass at least once in his life in holy pilgrimage—and to this end he journeyed through Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli to Alexandria. At the latter place, he tells us, there resided at that time a pious Imâm, named Borhân Uddîn, to whom, as was his wont, Ibn Batuta went to pay his respects.

"I one day went to him, when he said, 'I perceive that you are fond of travelling into various countries.' I said 'Yes,' although I had at that time no intention of

travelling into very distant parts. He replied, 'You must visit my brother Farîd Uddîn in India, and also my brother Rokn Uddîn in Sindia, and also my brother Borhân Uddîn in China; and when you see them, present my compliments to them.' I was astonished at what he said, and determined within myself to visit these countries: nor did I give up my purpose till I had met all the three mentioned by him, and presented his compliments to them."

It may be surmised that the pious priest was a shrewd judge of character, and had detected the symptoms of the "Go Fever" in his young disciple. Ibn Batuta, we may also suspect, wanted nothing better than an excuse for distant travel, and surely no slighter one could well be devised than that of conveying the compliments of a casual acquaintance to three total strangers!

Quitting Alexandria, Ibn Batuta journeyed through Upper Egypt into the Sudan, crossed to Syria, made pilgrimage to the holy places of Jerusalem and Bethlehem—for your Muhammadan, it must be remembered, has immense reverence for the Christian tradition—passed to Antioch, and at last arrived at Mecca. From Mecca he travelled extensively in Arabia and Persia, returning again to the Holy City, where he sojourned for the space of three years, pursuing theological studies which were later to furnish him with a weapon wherewith to cleave a path to the ends of the earth. For at this time Muhammadanism was the dominant religion in Northern and Western

India, and colonies of its professors were to be found scattered broadcast over the whole of the East. The extraordinary cohesion of the Muhammadans is such that to this day a True Believer need never lack food or clothes or shelter in a strange land if he care to present himself to his co-religionists; and Ibn Batuta, who had an immense esteem for himself, made a lavish use of the hospitality and generosity of the great brotherhood of which he counted himself no mean member. He tells us quite frankly the method of his procedure, and evidently considers that his presence conferred far more honour than could be repaid by mere material benefits, for he was that marvellous creation of the East, the professional holy man who sponges on the Faithful by right divine with complete satisfaction to himself—and to his neighbours. At every stage of his wanderings he speaks of alms and rich presents, but his name is always in the dative, never in the nominative case. In his eyes it is the whole duty of man to let this fourteenth, century Harold Skimpole live, and he does not hesitate to impress this great truth upon those of his entertainers who lack the insight to perceive it for themselves. Thus, in his later years, when he met the niggardly Sultan of Mâlî somewhere in the Central Sudan and was shocked by his parsimony, he tells us that—

"I one day rose up in his presence, and said: 'I have

travelled the world over, and have seen its Kings; and now I have been four months in thy territories, but no present, or even provision from thee, has yet reached me. Now, what shall I say of thee, when I shall be interrogated on the subject hereafter?' Upon this he gave me a house for my accommodation with suitable provisions. After this, the theologians visited me in the month of Ramathân, and, out of their number, they gave me three and thirty *methkâls* of gold."

From which it will be seen that Ibn Batuta did not lack the courage of his opinions!

After completing his studies in the Holy City—and were ever theological studies, before or since, more triumphantly remunerative?—he journeyed through Arabia to Aden, passed into Africa, penetrated as far south as Zanzibar, and came back to Mecca *viâ* the Straits of Hormuz and Kuzistan. Another visit to Egypt and Syria was next undertaken, and then Ibn Batuta joined the camp of Sultan Muhammad Uzbek, Khan of Kipchak, at the foot of the Caucasus. Here he was very hospitably entertained by the Khan, and since the itch of travel was still strong upon him, and the desire for the knowledge of new things still unquenched, he induced his host to send an escort with him to the city of Bolghar, in approximately the same latitude as Carlisle, in order that he might witness the shortness of the summer nights in the north. With characteristic devotion he counted the hours of darkness by the number of prayers which he had

time to recite between dusk and dawn, and he then returned to the Sultan's camp. He longed to penetrate into the Land of Darkness [where dog-sleighs were in use], which, men told him, lay yet further to the north; but he curbed his desire, partly, we may surmise, because he heard that there were no rich Muhammadans there to take proper care of the needs of a holy man.

One of the wives of the Sultan Muhammad Uzbek was a Greek princess, the daughter of the Emperor Andronicus the Younger of Constantinople, and she at this time determined to return to her own country, in order to leave her son under the care of her father, presumably that he might be brought up a Christian. Ibn Batuta, who was always ready for a chance trip into unknown cities, at once decided to attach himself to her party. At first, however, permission to do so was refused to him by the lady's husband,

"on account (as he coyly tells us) of some fears which he entertained respecting me. I flattered him, however, telling him that I should never appear before her save as his servant and guest, and that he need entertain no fears whatsoever."

So Ibn Batuta won his point, and, reckoning up his loot, which came to a handsome total, set out with the princess upon her homeward journey.

In the passage just quoted we are given one of many curious sidelights upon the character of our

holy man. Though he not only expounded the Muhammadan scriptures, but made it his business to live by them, he invariably took advantage of the permission of the Prophet to get married four-deep in every town where he halted for a little from his wanderings, and, in spite of his somewhat ostentatious piety and the ascetic practices in which he indulged in seasons of adversity, he generally contrived to keep also a flourishing harem of concubines and slave-girls to minister to his comfort. Moreover, he never visits a country without speaking of its women, almost invariably with grateful approval, and he loves to hint, as in the above instance, at favours received which did not rightly belong to him, and of jealousy awakened by him in the hearts of the great. There have been many other travellers before and since who have loved to adopt a similar pose, and to relate for the delectation of their countrymen the stories of their distant successes; but the attitude is, to our notions, curiously incongruous when we remember that Ibn Batuta laid claim to the support of the Faithful, and insisted upon it being extended to him, purely on account of his theological knowledge and his eminent sanctity. That he was thus able successfully to combine pleasure with profit furnishes but one more illustration of the ease with which in the East a man may impose his own valuation of himself upon his neighbours.

The Lady Bailûn, as he calls her—a corruption, it is supposed, of Philumena or Iolanthe—travelled to the borders of her father's dominions with an enormous escort of warriors, and at every stage of the way her portable mosque was set up, and a great display of piety and Muhammadan orthodoxy was made by her; but at a fortress called Mahtûli she was met by an escort sent from her father, and most of her Muhammadan guards here turned back, though Ibn Batuta continued to accompany her. He notes with shocked amazement, however, that as soon as she had passed into her father's dominions the Lady Bailûn incontinently abandoned her religious observances, drank wine, feasted on swine's flesh, and committed sundry other abominations, to the intense disgust of the Muhammadans of her party. In Constantinople, too, she put from her all pretence to allegiance to the Prophet, and Ibn Batuta, distressed beyond measure at the noisy ringing of Christian church bells, at the sight of a cross set up just within the cathedral of St. Sophia being "worshipped" by all who entered, and by the noxious Christian atmosphere of the place, hastened to shake its dust from off his feet, tarrying only to secure such gifts as were available from the renegade princess.

He accordingly made his way back to Sultan Muhammad Uzbek, then living at El Sarâi, where he garnered more loot, and made the acquaintance of

a rival holy man, the Imâm Noomân Uddîn, of whom he says :

“He is a man of the most liberal disposition, carries himself majestically with the King, but humbly with the poor and with his pupils. The sultan visits him every Friday, sits before him and shows him every kindness, while he behaves himself in the most repulsive manner.”

Leaving the Sultan Muhammad, Ibn Batuta next journeyed eastward to Bokhara, Samarkand, and Balkh, arriving presently at Tus, the site of the grave of the Khalif Hârûn El Rashîd. He crossed the Hindu Kush, and passed through Kâbul and Southern Afghanistan, whose people he describes as “powerful and violent, and the greater part of them highway robbers,” which shows that their character has not materially altered with the centuries.

“We left Kâbul,” he tells us, “by the way of Kirmâsh, which is a narrow pass situated between two mountains, in which the Afghans commit their robberies. We, thank God, escaped by plying them with arrows upon the heights throughout the whole of the way.”

In 1332, therefore, Ibn Batuta entered India, traversed the Punjâb, and came at last, *viâ* Multan, to the imperial city of Delhi. On his way thither he had the good fortune to meet two of the brothers of whom the Imâm of Alexandria had spoken to him, and had the privilege of conveying to them the complimentary messages with which he had been

entrusted some seven years earlier. The "infidel Hindus," for whom, as befits a pious Moslem, Ibn Batuta cherishes the most profound contempt and disgust, attacked his party on the road to Delhi, "but, by God's help, we put them to flight, having killed one horseman and twelve of the foot," for the hungry heart of Ibn Batuta, which was always ready for love and loot, for prayer and for pleasure, seems to have been equally happy when there was fighting to be done, more especially as its owner had the comfortable conviction that the Almighty was ever on his side.

The Sultan Muhammad Shah was absent from Delhi when Ibn Batuta arrived there, and our traveller fills up the pause in his narrative, which is occasioned by having to wait for the King's return, by telling his readers something of the history of the Moghul emperors. Into this I cannot here enter, but one tale, the romance of Balaban, afterwards Ghiâth Uddîn Ahmad, emperor of Delhi, may be told in short as a sample of the rest. Balaban, then, was a slave-boy in Bokhara, and was "a little, despicable, ill-looking wretch," whose ugliness so disgusted a passing fakir that he said to him, "You little Turk!" which is there held to be an insult. The child at once replied "I am here, good sir!" without showing any trace of resentment. The fakir then bade him get some pomegranates from a street-stall, which the boy did,

paying for the fruit with his own money, and bringing it to the fakir, who thereupon said, "We give you the kingdom of India." Little Balaban promptly kissed his own hand, and said, "I have accepted it, and am quite satisfied!"

Shortly after this incident the Sultan of Delhi sent to Bokhara to buy slaves, but Balaban was rejected on account of his hideous and miserable appearance. Balaban, therefore, said to the emperor, "Lord of the World, why have you bought all these slaves?" "For my own sake, no doubt," replied the Emperor, smiling at the urchin. "Then buy me, for God's sake," cried the child, and for God's sake the child was bought.

As he was fit for very little they made him a cup-bearer, and a year or two later the Court astronomers declared that some menial of the royal household was destined to wrest the kingdom from the sultan's successor, and that his identity could be determined by certain marks upon his body which had been revealed to them. The Sultan, therefore, ordered that all his servants should be examined by the astronomers in his presence, and the work went on from early in the morning until late in the afternoon. The cup-bearers were the last to be called in, and by then they had grown so hungry with waiting that they had sent Balaban, the meanest of their number and the one upon whom they were all accustomed to impose

any disagreeable duty, out into the town in search of cooked food. The stalls near the palace were empty and he had to go to a considerable distance, wherefore when the hour of examination came he was absent. The cupbearers, however, substituted another wretched-looking brat for him, smearing his face with pitch so that the deception should not be detected, and in this manner, by a happy accident, Balaban escaped the scrutiny of the astronomers. Later, on account of his cleverness, he was made a soldier, distinguished himself, and rose to the rank of Nawâb, and in the end seized the throne from the son of the man who had bought him for the love of God! This is one of the true romances of which the history of India under native rule is compact, and the fact that, under British domination, such dramatic turns of fortune's wheel as that which raised Balaban from the dust to the throne of the Moghuls are no longer possible, does more than aught else to set the natives of the great peninsula mourning over the vanished past. It is true that under the new *régime* the majority are safer, happier, more prosperous than ever before; but it is true also that in the monotonous present no ragged urchin carries in his grimy fist a pomegranate that may be exchanged for the kingdom of the East.

Another romantic figure is that of Toglik Ghiâth Uddin, the father of Muhammad Shah. He also rose by his wit and the strength of his sword-arm from the

most humble beginnings to the post of Governor of Debâlbûr, which by successful rebellion he presently exchanged for the throne itself. He, however, having lived by the sword, perished, not indeed by the sword, but by violence. The story as told by Ibn Batuta is curious. Toglik was returning to Delhi in triumph after successfully repressing a rebellion, and he sent orders to his son, who afterwards was the Sultan Muhammad Shah, and who had been left in charge of the imperial city, to prepare a temporary palace for his reception. This Muhammad did, constructing a wooden building of immense proportions in a few days. The staircase of this structure was so broad that it admitted of the elephants ascending it and entering the great hall to do homage to the Emperor upon his throne, but one of the stairs was fashioned in such a way that directly an elephant's foot struck it the whole building would come to the ground with a crash, destroying all within it. Into this cunningly arranged "booby-trap" Muhammad lured his father, his brother who was preferred before him, and several hundreds of the loyal nobles, and by this simple means cleared his own way to the throne.

Of the character of Muhammad Shah himself Ibn Batuta has a great deal to tell us. He seems to have possessed to an unusual degree the virtue which above all others was essential in the eyes of our traveller—the virtue of generosity. This, upon which in his

narrative Ibn Batuta again and again lays great stress, is evidently held by him to cover a multitude of sins, but none the less he has some lurid tales to record of this open-handed King. That he should have resorted to murder on a magnificent scale in order to get possession of his kingdom does not excite surprise in the traveller, few of the Moghul Emperors having had the good fortune to die in their beds ; but the "impetuous and inexorable" nature of the monarch seems to have terrified him. He gives several instances in illustration, of which the following is, perhaps, the most striking :

"On one occasion he took offence at the inhabitants of Delhi, on account of the numbers of its inhabitants who had revolted, and the liberal support which these had received from the rest ; and to such a pitch did the quarrel rise, that the inhabitants wrote a letter consisting of several pages, in which they very much abused him : they then sealed it up, and directed it to 'The Real Head and Lord of the World,' adding, 'Let no other person read it.' They then threw it over the gate of the palace. Those who saw it could not do other than send it to him, and he read it accordingly. The consequence was that he ordered all the inhabitants to quit the place ; and, upon some delay being evinced, he made a proclamation stating that what person soever, being an inhabitant of that city, should be found in any of its houses or streets, should receive condign punishment. Upon this day all went out. But, his servants finding a blind man in one of the houses, and a bedridden one in another, the Emperor commanded

the bedridden man to be projected from a balista, and the blind one to be dragged by his feet to Dawlatâbâd, which is at a distance of ten days, and he was so dragged ; but, his limbs dropping off by the way, only one of his legs was brought to the place intended, and was then thrown into it : for the order had been that they should go to this place. When I entered Delhi it was almost a desert. Its buildings were very fine ; in other respects it was quite empty, its houses having been forsaken by its inhabitants. The King, however, had given orders that any one who wished to leave his own city may come and reside there. The consequence was the greatest city in the world had the fewest inhabitants."

One wonders how many people conceived a desire to quit their own cities in order to take up their precarious residence in the capital, at the invitation of the sultan who had made of it a desert. That some were found to do so I make no doubt, for the long-suffering patience of the Oriental is only one degree more wonderful than his blind, unquestioning faith.

In Delhi Ibn Batuta, as usual, fell upon his feet. He was treated with great kindness and "respect," to use his own characteristic phrase, by the sultan, and on being asked to name what boon he would, he at once elected to be appointed Judge in Delhi, saying that the profession of judge was one that ran in his family. Judge, accordingly, he was appointed over a people of whose language and customs he was blissfully ignorant, but he tells us that he had native assessors to aid him,

and it is probable that he contrived to make them do most of the work while he saw that the emoluments found their way to their proper destination. He was granted a sum of ready money equivalent to one year's salary, a handsome monthly stipend was added to this, and unless Ibn Batuta belied all the traditions of Oriental justice (which seems highly improbable), he doubtless drew a full share of the "presents" which his soul loved from the coffers of rival litigants. Be this how it may, for a space we see Ibn Batuta in his glory. He married as deeply as the Law allowed, bought slave-girls and concubines without number, and lived royally in the imperial city. At all future periods he is wont to recur again and again to the memory of the halcyon days "when I was Judge in Delhi," and had all gone well with him it is possible that he might have spent the remainder of his life in the imperial city and never have left to us the record of his wanderings.

But Ibn Batuta, honest soul! was cursed by desires as disproportionate as those of the sand-fly which, so the Eastern proverb tells us, is ambitious of some day swallowing a man whole. Accordingly, in spite of gifts of ready money, a regular stipend, and (unless we wrong him) less proper sources of income, we find him presently up to his ears in debt, and petitioning the sultan to discharge his liabilities. Muhammad Shah justified his reputation for generosity by satisfying all claims, but the leech-like propensities of the

holy Judge must have begun about this time, we fancy, to strain the royal patience. In any case, a very short period elapses after the payment of his creditors before we find Ibn Batuta in deep disgrace. The matter, as related by him,—and we cannot avoid the suspicion that we are here told something less than the whole truth—may be best recorded in his own words :

“ Some time after the Emperor’s return from the Maabar (Malabar) districts, and his ordering my residence in Delhi, his mind happened to change respecting a sheikh in whom he had placed great confidence, and even visited, and who then resided in a cave without the city. He took him accordingly and imprisoned him, and then interrogated his children as to who had resorted to him. They named the persons who had done so, and myself among the rest ; for it happened that I had visited him in the cave. I was consequently ordered to attend at the gate of the palace, and a council to sit within. I attended in this way for four days, and few were those who did so who escaped death. I betook myself, however, to continuous fasting, and tasted nothing but water. On the first day I repeated the sentence, ‘ God is our support and most excellent patron ! ’ (Kurân, Surat III.) three-and-thirty thousand times ; and after the fourth day, by God’s goodness was I delivered ; but the sheikh and all those who had visited him, except myself, were put to death. Upon this I gave up the office of Judge, and bidding farewell to the world, attached myself to the holy and pious sheikh, the saint and the phoenix of his age, Kamâl Uddîn Abd Ullah El Gâzi, who had wrought many open miracles. All I had I gave to the fakirs ; and putting on the tunic of one of them, I attached myself to

this sheikh for five months, until I had kept a fast of five continued days ; I then breakfasted on a little rice."

To me it is a very pathetic figure, this of our poor Ibn Batuta fallen suddenly upon evil days, standing in the worst possible of funks at the palace gate, repeating a holy text with fearful energy, and thereafter, deprived of the Judgeship, the possession of which had afforded him such frank delight, putting on the ragged robe of a loathly fakir. His fear must indeed have been real, and the sense of the narrowness of his escape must have been intense ere they sufficed to shake him out of himself to the extent of giving away his property to the poor, and thus doing violence to his habit and rule of life. His resignation of the Judgeship, we suspect, was hardly a voluntary act, and it is probable that the residue of his worldly possessions, of which he so generously disposed, was not large. It may also have occurred to him that for the moment safety lay in obscurity, and that his future livelihood might be dependent upon the impression which he could now contrive to make upon the Faithful by the putting on of a somewhat ostentatious sanctity. The suspicion, too, is irresistible that Ibn Batuta lacked at this period of his career the moral support of a blameless conscience ; that in a word, he was uneasily aware that he deserved to be hanged, and knowing this, quite rightly regarded his escape as a miracle for which Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate, was to be most devoutly

thanked. At any rate, for the time "the devil was sick, and the devil a saint would be," but it is with a feeling of altogether immoral relief that we are presently reintroduced to our old friend as unregenerate as ever, as hungry for pleasure and for pelf, as eager for love and for battle, and are taught that his almsgiving and his austerities were only of the nature of a temporary eclipse, and that when all was once more well with him "the devil a saint was he."

For after the deepest darkness comes the dawn, and soon,

"the Emperor sending for me, I went to him in my tunic, and he received me more graciously than ever. He said, 'It is my wish to send you as ambassador to the Emperor of China, for I know you love travelling in various countries.' I consented, and he sent dresses of honour, horses, money, &c., with everything necessary for the journey."

The mission with which Ibn Batuta and his companions were to be entrusted was a return embassy despatched in answer to one which had reached the court of Delhi from China. The latter had had for its object the rebuilding of an idol-temple in Eastern India, in a district which had fallen under the domination of the Muhammadan power, but which was of interest to the Emperor of China because his subjects were accustomed to resort thither for the purposes of pilgrimage. The Chinese Ambassadors had brought

with them very handsome presents, which were now to be returned in kind, and to the question at issue between the two Powers the Muhammadan Prince replied in characteristic fashion. He said that he abominated idolatry, and could by no means permit its practice in his country—unless it was made worth his while to do so. In other words, he would only allow the temple to be rebuilt if a handsome sum was forthcoming in the way of tribute. Our professional holy man, who had always such stores of hatred and contempt to place at the disposal of the infidels, contents himself with recording this amusing instance of Muhammadan pliability, without entering so much as a word of protest against the heterodoxy of the Sultan's action. Accordingly, he set about his preparations for the journey to China, revelling in the affluence and prosperity which were again his to enjoy, and recording the value of the presents to be sent with the mission in a spirit of delighted gusto. Among the items mentioned were "one hundred Hindu singing slave-girls," which, if you come to think about it, concentrates into half a dozen words an untold amount of human grief, for these daughters of the infidels represented a gift which cost the Muhammadan Sultan nothing, the entire burden being borne by the unhappy Hindu population who saw their children thus ruthlessly torn from them. In this connection it is worth noting that Ibn Batuta's

engaging failings, and his Wemmick-like attachment to "portable property," had by this time become so well known to his employers that the presents were put, not in his charge, but in that of one of his more reliable colleagues.

A start was made from Delhi on 17th Safar, A.H. 743 (A.D. 1342), but finding at a place called El Jalâli that the Muhammadans were beset by the Hindus, Ibn Batuta and his party threw in their lot with the former, and took a vigorous share in all the fighting that was to be had. In one of these encounters with the infidels, Ibn Batuta was cut off from his friends, taken prisoner, stripped to the skin, in a fashion which has been made familiar to us by more recent events, and after wandering about in this condition for many days, "experiencing the greatest horrors," finally made his way back to Delhi. At the same time the officer in charge of the presents was slain. A fresh start was made soon after, and on this occasion the embassy got to Kâlikût on the Malabar coast without mishap.

The thing which seems chiefly to have struck Ibn Batuta on his journey through India was the jogis and magicians, of whom he here relates many curious tales. He records the superstition, still so universal among the natives of Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, that these men had the power of becoming were-tigers at will, and he also speaks of their habit of fasting

for incredible periods, and of allowing themselves to be buried alive without apparent inconvenience.

"I saw too" (he says), "in the city of Sanjarûr, one of the Moslems who had been taught by them, and who set up for himself a lofty cell, like an obelisk. Upon the top of this he stood for five-and-twenty days, during which time he neither ate nor drank. In this situation I left him, nor do I know how long he continued there after I had left the place. People say that they mix certain seeds, one of which is destined for a certain number of days or months, and that they stand in need of no other support during all this time."

He speaks too of witches, whom he calls *goftârs*, and of the ordeal by water, by means of which their guilt or innocence is proved, and, reverting to the jogis, he goes on to relate the following curious anecdote :

"I was once in the presence of the Emperor of Hindustân, when two of these jogis, wrapt up in cloaks, with their heads covered (for they take out all their hairs, both of their heads and arm-pits, with powder), came in. The Emperor caressed them and said, pointing to me, 'This is a stranger ; show him what he has never yet seen.' They said, 'We will.' One of them then assumed the form of a cube and arose from the earth, and in this cubic shape he occupied a place in the air over our heads. I was so much astonished and terrified by this, that I fainted and fell to the earth. The Emperor then ordered me some medicine which he had with him, and upon taking this I recovered and sat up ; the cubic figure still remaining in the air just as it had been. His companion then took a

sandal belonging to one of those who had come out with him, and struck it upon the ground as if he had been angry. The sandal then ascended until it became opposite in situation with the cube. It then struck it upon the neck, and the cube descended gradually to the earth, and at last rested in the place which it had left. The Emperor then told me that the man who took the form of a cube was a disciple to the owner of the sandal. 'And,' continued he, 'had I not entertained fears for the safety of thy intellect, I should have ordered them to show thee greater things than these.' From this, however, I took a palpitation at the heart, until the Emperor ordered me a medicine which restored me."

We cannot help regretting that Ibn Batuta's heart, which was so stout in battle, so hungry for the taste of strange lands and new things, and ready to brave so much in the pursuit of wealth, and pleasure, and knowledge, should thus have failed him in the presence of what he conceived to be the supernatural, for his general accuracy is so authentic that his record might have done much towards supplying a solution of the mysteries which he witnessed. As it is, there is only one more story in his narrative which bears upon the marvels of Oriental magic, and though it belongs properly to the history of his wanderings in China, it may fittingly be quoted in this place. The incident occurred at a banquet in the city of El Khansâ, at which the King's jugglers were present :

"The chief of them took a wooden sphere, in which there

were holes, and in these long straps, and threw it up into the air until it went out of sight, as I myself witnessed, while the strap remained in his hand. He then commanded one of his disciples to take hold of and ascend by this strap, which he did until he also went out of sight. His master then called him three times, but no answer came; then he took a knife in his hand, apparently in anger, which he applied to the strap. This also ascended till it went quite out of sight; he then threw the hand of the boy upon the ground, then his foot; then his other hand, then his other foot; then his body, then his head. He then came down, panting for breath, and his clothes stained with blood. The man then kissed the ground before the general, who addressed him in Chinese and gave him some other order. The juggler then took the limbs of the boy and applied them one to another; he then stamped upon them and it stood up complete and erect. I was astonished, and was seized in consequence with a palpitation at the heart; but they gave me some drink and I recovered. The Judge of the Muhammadans was sitting by my side, who swore that there was neither ascent, descent, nor cutting away of limbs, but the whole was mere juggling.”

In other words, the Kazi of the Muhammadans, who lived in the place and was accustomed to such exhibitions, understood that the marvel was due, not to magic, but to *suggestion*—a truth which is borne in irresistibly upon the mind of every close observer of Oriental miracles, the which are performed to-day much as they were in the time of Ibn Batuta. A similar explanation will doubtless account for the gentleman who hung in mid-air in the form of a

cube, and only returned to the earth again when the slipper struck him on the neck.

At Kâlikût new troubles befell our wanderer. The presents and the bulk of the embassy embarked upon ships bound for China, but Ibn Batuta, who had had some difficulty about his cabin, slept on shore, although his gear and his favourite slave-girl, to say nothing of his wives, had gone on board. In the night a great storm arose; some of the vessels were wrecked; and Ibn Batuta's ship and that containing the presents for the Emperor of China were washed out to sea. Ibn Batuta himself witnessed the catastrophe from the shore in an agony of impotent distraction, and in the morning found himself alone in the world, with nothing to his name save "my prostration-carpet, and ten dinars which had been given me by some holy men" —for even when filling the exalted post of Ambassador this excellent theologian did not disdain the alms of the Faithful. In the hope that his ship might have put in at the port of Kawlam, Ibn Batuta journeyed overland to that place, but could there get no news of her. He did not dare return to Delhi, he tells us, for "the Emperor would have said, 'How came you to leave the present, and stay upon the shore?' for I knew what sort of man he was in cases of this kind."

Thrown thus upon the wide, wide world, separated from the present and from his beloved property, in miserable uncertainty as to the fate of his favourite

slave-girl, and haunted by fear of the evil things that might befall him were he to return to Delhi, Ibn Batuta betook himself to Jamâl Uddîn, King of Hinaur, who received him honourably, and appointed him a house with "suitable maintenance." He was, however, far from happy, which is attested by the fact that he attached himself to the mosque and mentions that he read the Kurân through daily, sometimes more than once. It is possible that this devotion to piety was a necessity imposed upon him by circumstances, as it behoved one who would live upon the Faithful to give practical and unmistakable tokens of his sanctity; but it is noticeable that Ibn Batuta's prayers always keep step with the measure of his troubles, and that, like many of us, he is never so pious as when he encounters adversity.

But Ibn Batuta could fight as well as pray, and very soon we find him aiding the King of Hinaur in an expedition against Sindâbur, after which, he adds characteristically, "The King gave me a slave-girl, with clothing and other necessaries; and I resided with him some months."

He was still bent, however, on finding the missing ship, if possible, and to this end he presently returned to Kawlam, Kâlikût, and Shâliât, at which place tidings reached him that the ship had returned to China, and that his precious slave-girl had died on board her. "I was very much distressed on her

account," he says, with quite unusual feeling; "and the infidels, too, had seized my property, and my followers had been dispersed among the Chinese and others."

Ibn Batuta, therefore, returned to his friend, the hospitable King Jamâl Uddîn, from whose kingdom, after a little more fighting, he proceeded to the Maldives, where he had very soon established himself in the possession of four wives and a number of slave-girls. These islands pleased him greatly, for the climate was congenial and the society to his taste, the men being the reverse of warlike, while the ladies were not only handsome and kind, but were to be married by the stranger for "a very small dowry." In one of the islands, too, he presently became Judge, and though this was a fall from the high estate which he had enjoyed during the glorious days "when I was Judge in Delhi," he seems to have made the post pay him sufficiently well, and might have been content to hold it for life had he not excited the jealousy of the vizier, who was also the husband of the Queen of the place.

All too soon, then, necessity goaded him into fresh wanderings, and he passed over to Ceylon, where he was hospitably entertained by the Kandian King, who, at his own charges, defrayed the expenses of the holy man's pilgrimage to Adam's Peak. He claimed the royal favour and kindness on the grounds of his

marriage with the sister of the King of Hinaur, an incident in his career of which he has not previously made mention, and which may possibly have been a happy invention of the moment. True or false, however, his royal connection served to pass him, at the expense of his neighbours, all over Ceylon, and later, through a good deal of Southern India and as far north as Bengal, a district which he describes as "a hell full of good things," a phrase which might well have come from the mouth of some of old John Company's servants in a later day. Once more, in returning to the "Bombay side," it was his bad luck to be worsted in fight by the "infidel Hindus," the battle being fought this time on the high seas. From this encounter he emerged stripped of everything, even of his clothing; but years of practice had now rendered him so expert in reconstructing his fortunes that the incident does not seem to have even seriously incommoded him: at any rate, it did not upset him sufficiently to send him clamouring to the nearest mosque.

From Bengal he at last set sail for China, not with any hope of rejoining the embassy from Delhi, but apparently because he was still eager to accumulate new experiences. He had previously made a short return voyage to the Maldives for the purpose of seeing one of his children, and he now passed successively to the Nicobars, to Sumatra, to the Malay

Peninsula, which he calls *Mul-Java*, or the mainland of Java, and so on to Southern China. Here, with his accustomed shrewdness, he observes and records all that came under his eyes, was struck by the high standard of organisation to which the Chinese had attained in the administration of their country, their trade methods, the number of the Muhammadans settled in the ports, and the extraordinary care which the Government took of strangers. He makes mention of the "obstruction of Gog and Magog," by which, of course, he meant the Great Wall, but he never met anyone who had seen it, and it is extremely likely that he never really reached Peking, though he professes to have done so. His account of historical events which are supposed to have taken place during his stay in China, too, is a piece of rank fiction, and on the whole the portion of his narrative which deals with the Celestial Empire, apart from his notes on the manners and customs of the people, is at once less reliable and less interesting than any other part of his book. One incident, however, must be related, for though we may question its truth, it furnishes an interesting illustration of the faith which Ibn Batuta was ever ready to place in the prowess of religious ascetics. When he was in India he visited a certain Sheikh Jalâl Uddîn of Tebriz, "one of the greatest saints, and one of those singular individuals who have the power of working great and notable miracles."

“On the day I presented myself to the sheikh he had on a religious garment made of fine goat’s-hair. I was astonished at it, and said to myself, ‘I wish the sheikh would give it to me.’ When I went to bid him farewell, he arose and went to the side of the cave, took off the goat’s-hair garment, as well as the fillet of his head and his sleeves, and put them on me. The fakirs told me that it was not his practice to put on this garment, that he had put it on only on the occasion of my coming, for he had said to them, ‘This garment will be wished for by my Mogrebine; but an infidel king shall take it from him, and shall give it to our brother Borhân Uddîn of Sâgirj, whose it is, and for whose use it has been made.’ When I was told this by the fakirs, I said: ‘As I have a blessing from the sheikh, and as he has clothed me with his own clothes, I will never enter with them into the presence of any King, either infidel or Muhammadan.’ After this I left the sheikh. It happened, however, after a considerable time, that I entered the country of China, and went as far as the city of Khansâ. Upon a certain occasion, when my companions had left me on account of the press of the multitude, I had this garment on and was on the road, and I met a vizier with a large body. He happened to cast his eyes upon me, and called me to him. He then took me by the hand and asked me why I had come to this country; nor did he leave me until we came to the King’s palace. I wished to go but he would not allow me to do so, but took me to the King, who interrogated me about Muhammadan sovereigns; to all which I gave answers. He then cast his eyes upon the garment and began to praise it, and said to the vizier: ‘Take it off him.’ To this I could offer no resistance, so he took it; but ordered me ten dresses of honour, and a horse with its furniture, and money for my necessities.

This changed my mind. I then called to mind the words of the sheikh, that an infidel King should take it; and my wonder was increased. After a year had elapsed, I entered the palace of the King of China at Khân Bâlik. My object was to visit the cell of the Sheikh Borhân Uddin of Sâgirj [the third sheikh, it will be remembered, to whom his compliments had been sent by the Imâm of Alexandria]. I did so, and found him reading, and the very goat's-hair garment I have been mentioning was on him. I was surprised at this, and was turning the garment over in my hand, when he said, 'Why do you turn the garment over; do you know it?' I said 'I do; it is the garment which the King of Khansâ took from me.' He answered, 'This garment was made for me by my brother Jalâl Uddîn for my own use, who also wrote to me to say that the garment would come to me by such a person.' He then produced the letter, which I read, and could not help wondering at the exactness of the sheikh. I then told him the whole story. He answered, 'My brother Jalâl Uddîn was superior to all this; he had a perfect control over matter; but now he has been taken to God's mercy.' He then said, 'I have been told that he performed the morning prayer every day in Mecca; that he went on the pilgrimage annually, because he was never to be seen on the two days of Arafat and the Feast, no one knowing whither he had gone.'

Here we have instances of two things of which examples survive to our own time—the little, useless miracles which Muhammadan "saints" are piously believed to perform, and the superstition which ascribes to these personages the power of making the pilgrimage

to Mecca without the aid of human transport. I, *moi qui vous parle*, count among my privileges the personal friendship of a Muhammadan Saiyid, one whom Ibn Batuta would doubtless have described as "the saint and phoenix of his age," who lives in a beautiful garden near the mouth of the Trěnggânú river on the eastern shores of the Malay Peninsula, and enjoys a reputation for being able to accomplish both these marvels. It is related of him that having on one occasion committed himself to the statement that where there is water there also are fish, and its accuracy having been challenged, he at once confounded his opponents by performing a miracle. Had he possessed a powerful microscope he might perhaps have proved his point quite satisfactorily without having resort to supernatural powers, but failing this instrument he ordered a coconut to be opened, and immediately displayed to the wondering throng a fish swimming in water where no fish should have been. How he did this, or whether he really did it at all, I cannot pretend to say, but as it was at once hailed as a miracle and was accepted for a fact, it served to prepare the public mind for greater wonders. Therefore the mere absence of this holy man from his usual haunts at certain periods of the Muhammadan year was held to be conclusive proof that he was paying a miraculous visit to Mecca, and when this impression was confirmed by his own positive statements on the subject, the matter was

at once considered to have been placed beyond the limits of a doubt. It is thus that miracles are manufactured in Asia even in our own time; and in lands where men are ready to accept the patently impossible on such slender evidence, can we wonder that they are also prone to take a man at his own valuation?—a habit which, as we have seen, proved to be very much to the advantage of the excellent Ibn Batuta and to others of his kidney.

After a year or so in China, in which country Ibn Batuta, though he did pretty well, did not reap quite so rich a harvest from his neighbours as usual, our wanderer set out on his homeward voyage. The ship in which he sailed belonged to a Muhammadan Prince of Sumatra, and on the journey across the China Sea the travellers saw a phenomenon which is thus described.

“We saw one morning at daybreak a mountain in the sea, at a distance of about twenty miles, and towards this the wind was carrying us. The sailors wondered at this, because we were far from land, and because no mountain had been observed in that part of the sea. It was certain that if the wind should force us to it we should be lost. We then betook ourselves to repentance and prayer to Almighty God with all our hearts; and in addition to this the merchants made many vows. The wind then became calmed in some degree, when, after sunrise, we perceived that the mountain we had seen was in the air, and that we could see light between it and the sea. I

was much astonished at this, but seeing the sailors in the utmost perturbation, and bidding farewell to one another, I said, 'Pray, what is the matter?' They said, 'What we supposed to be a mountain is really a *Rokh*, and if he sees us we shall assuredly perish, there being now between us and him a distance of ten miles only.' But God in His goodness gave us a good wind, and we steered our course in a direction from him, so that we saw no more of him, nor had we any knowledge of the particulars of his shape."

This encounter, as described by Ibn Batuta, is peculiarly interesting because, while he explains it by the supposition that the mountain-island was a *roc*, such as that which carried Sinbad, he gives in reality an account of what is a very common optical illusion in these tropical waters—an island apparently hovering above a sea from which it is severed by a space of air. It will be noted that this was only seen after the sun had risen, and indeed it is the refraction of the sun-glare which creates the illusion referred to. If Ibn Batuta had held upon his course, and had not fled from the phenomenon, he would have found that when he drew near to it the island settled down into the sea in quite a commonplace fashion. Instead, he ended his days in the belief that he had seen a *roc*, and had only narrowly escaped being devoured by the monster.

After abiding several months in Sumatra, awaiting the change of the monsoon, as Marco Polo had done

before him, Ibn Batuta sailed on towards the West, touching at Kâlikût, and reaching Zafar in Arabia in the year 1347 A.D. Thence he passed successively to Bagdad, Damascus, Egypt, and Mecca, whence, after laying down the burden of his sins at the holy shrine, he made his way back at last to Fez.

“The reigning King at this time [he tells us] was the Commander of the Faithful, Abu Anân. I presented myself to him and was honoured by a sight of him. The awe that surrounded him made me forget that of the King of Irâk; his elegance, that of the Emperor of India; his politeness, that of the King of Yemen; his bravery, that of the King of the Turks; his mildness, that of the Emperor of Constantinople; his religious carriage, that of the Emperor of Turkistân; his knowledge, that of the King of Sumatra; for he so overwhelmed me with his favours that I found myself quite unequal to express my gratitude. In Fez, too, I terminated my travels, after I had assured myself that it is the most beautiful of countries.”

All of which means that Ibn Batuta, having quartered himself upon almost all the Kings and Muhammadan peoples of Asia, now proposed to himself to end his days at the charges of his own sovereign and his fellow-countrymen.

But he was reckoning without a full knowledge of the compelling power of the “Go Fever,” for very soon we find him touring away again, first to Tangier to visit the grave of his father, and thence to Spain

to fight for the Faith against the infidels. A year or so later he came back once more to Fez, but only for a little while, since the untamed restlessness of his character would not suffer him to abide there in peace. This time he penetrated deep into the Sudan, but all that Africa could show to him was squalid in the eyes of one who had looked upon the glories of Delhi and the wonders of Cathay. The abjectness and the barbarism of the negroes offended him; the ladies did not appeal to his fastidious taste; and though he sponged upon the Faithful as successfully as ever, there is a crabbed note running through these final chapters of his narrative which seems to show that the longings of the "hungry heart" were still unassuaged, and that its owner was growing old and rather weary. None the less, in spite of the much that he had seen and known, he was barely fifty years of age when, in 1353, he came back to Fez and to its Sultan, the man of many virtues, "to whom," he says, "I presented myself and kissed hands. I now finished my travels and took up my residence in this country. May God be praised!"

Thus ends his narrative of wanderings which, at the lowest estimate, had extended over upwards of 75,000 English miles, the story being reduced to writing by Muhammad Ibn Juzai, the Sultan's secretary. Of what befell Ibn Batuta in the years that followed we possess no knowledge, but I think we

have learned enough of him to feel moderately confident that he continued to the end of his life to fall upon his feet with the utmost dexterity. Perhaps the itch of travel drove him forth again never to return; or perhaps, hanging up his well-worn staff at last, he lived royally for the remainder of his days upon the bounty of the Sultan of Fez and upon the lavish hospitality and commendable piety of a religious population. Be sure, however, that wherever he dwelt, and no matter where he died, it was in a home well tended by wives and slave-girls, well stocked with the portable property he loved, and that that home was a constant resort for those who had gifts in their hands, an ear to lend to tales of distant countries, and an eye for sanctity and theological learning not too modestly displayed.

TIME AND TOBAGO

“There was an old man of Tobago
Who lived on rice-pudding and sago. . . .”

THE old nursery couplet had been ringing in my head all night, keeping step with the measured tramp of the screw, the two completing lines eluding me—as they elude me yet—with a maddening agility, and I awoke with the words still chiming in my brain. I awoke, too, to a realisation of the fact that the ship was at rest; that Tobago had been reached, and that the bay wherein we lay at anchor, into whose placid waters I could hear the pelicans taking splashing headers, was that upon the shores of which stands Scarborough, the capital of the island. I dressed quickly and went on deck, spurred as of old with the keen desire to see new things, and so looked out for the first time upon the island made famous to our childhood by the dietary exploits of the harmless pudding-eater, the details of whose later adventures my treacherous memory still refused to surrender.

Immediately in front of me the houses of

Scarborough clung to the side of a low hill and clambered up its slopes, the roofs of grey shingles or red tiles pricking up through the mass of greenery which, half smothering them, fell in a sheer wall to the deep blue of the bay. Here and there a hut stood out wholly revealed, as though it had burst through the foliage and had shaken itself free of leaves and branches; elsewhere a shingle wall was visible, the faded squares of wood looking as though the entire building had been roughly tacked together with a packing-needle; the substantial Government offices, with the slender flag-mast flanking them, rose prominently above their neighbours, but for the rest the little town was mostly veiled from sight by that marvellous drapery of drooping palm-fronds and clustering leafy boughs. To my left, round the curve of the bay, the land ran off into the distance—a line of yellow beach, with a fringe of coconut palms dividing it from the low, grass-grown hills behind. On my right, the long shoulder of another grassy hill sloped upward from the roofs of Scarborough to an eminence crowned by an ancient fort now crumbling to decay,—a fort whereof the dismantled defences and the rows of big guns, innocuous and obsolete, looked like the ragged jaws of a monster, once terrible and destructive, now grown impotent through age. Farther inland again rose other hills, their sides yellow-green with fading grasses and set with tangles

of low scrub, and upon the crest of the highest of these were visible the earthworks from behind which, once long ago, the guns of France pounded at the British fort which belched answering flame yonder half a mile across that green and now somnolent valley.

Time and Tobago! This lovely tropic isle is packed with history, for she has seen days good and bad, many masters of many nationalities, ups and downs of fortune, wealth and poverty, prosperity and sore distress, glory and humiliation, and a hundred other contrasts more acute than those which fall to the lot of most corners of our world, since that time, more than four hundred years ago, when the Spaniard, first of all our race, looked from afar upon her forest-clad uplands. If this were some scarce-trodden islet of the Eastern Seas bursting now for the first time from aeon-long obscurity, hopes might well run high for the brilliancy of her future, so fair she is, so fertile and so beautiful. But to-day she is oppressed by the splendour of her past. The tide of the years has lifted her up, has borne her high on a wave-crest of glory and prosperity, and then ebbing has left her a shattered derelict. She is an island of graves, of ruins, of memories, of haunting shadows of what has been, and depressed by the tradition of all that once was hers, of all that time has filched from her, hope flickers and fears to burst into flame.

This is an isle of ghosts. Her shores and hills, her decaying towns, her wastes of grass-grown upland, her quiet, shady woods, all are haunted by the memories of men and women of many races who have made of them their home; and to-day, as you ride through the land, it seems to the imagination to be filled by the whispered sounds of spirit voices.

Of the earliest inhabitants of Tobago nothing is known, and barely a trace remains. The doomed Carib race, which elsewhere has been absorbed or blotted out by men of sterner breeds, probably peopled Tobago once, as it peopled so many islands of the middle western Atlantic; but since first history, as we understand it, began, this little fragment of rock and loam, set eternally in the summer seas, has held no native, indigenous population. Occasionally stone implements are found, proving that in prehistoric times a people, to whose forgotten existence these rude tools alone bear witness, roamed along the shores and through the forests of Tobago; and from Trinidad, the peaks of whose mountains are visible from Scarborough, wandering bands of Caribs made occasional descents upon its coasts. It was such a visitation as this which, in 1625, caused the destruction of the English settlement from Barbados—an incident that possibly suggested to Defoe the arrival of the savages with their prisoner Man Friday, since that author is popularly supposed to

have used descriptions of Tobago as the background for his "Robinson Crusoe."

Be this how it may, the first British navigators to land in Tobago came thither in 1580, and found the island uninhabited. No settlement was established, though in that year the British flag was hoisted on the island, and James I., and his son after him, claimed Tobago as an appanage of the English crown. The latter sovereign made a present of the island to the Earl of Pembroke in 1628, after the colony from Barbados had come to a bloody end; but volunteer settlers were not, apparently, forthcoming, and the new owner was unable to make any use of the gift. Four years later, however, three hundred people from Flushing, ignoring British claims in the fashion which the international courtesy of that day made usual, landed in Tobago, called the place "New Walcheren," started a colony, and in less than twelve months were ignominiously expelled by a handful of Spaniards from Trinidad, aided by Indian war-parties. The subsequent adventures of the men of Flushing are not recorded; for the "three hundred persons" drop back into the oblivion from which they had emerged but for a moment, and the waves of time close over their heads.

In 1642 the Duke of Courland,—the Ruler of the Baltic State, which was at that time practically independent of the Czar,—fitted out two ships which

sailed for Tobago, and chose as the site of a new colony the spot on the northern coast of the island which retains the name of Courland Bay even to this day. The colony was duly formed, though its success does not appear to have been pronounced; and in 1654 a second Dutch expedition set out from Flushing and formed a settlement upon the southern coast of Tobago. Divided from one another by only a few miles of forest-covered hills, the two colonies maintained friendly relations for a space of barely four years; but in 1658 the Dutch attacked the Courlanders and routed them utterly. Once more the vanquished disappear from the scene, without a hint to indicate what was their fate or what their subsequent adventures. Evidently the seventeenth century was not a good period during which to find oneself upon the losing side—more especially if the scene of defeat chanced to be a remote island of the West.

It was about this time that Louis XIV. asserted a claim, in the name of France, to Tobago—the French being the fifth European nation, if the predatory Spanish expedition of 1632 be taken into account,—which had concerned itself with the ownership of this little island. This claim appears to have been based upon nothing sounder than the purely general and acquisitive principles of that land-grabbing age; but the merchant of Flushing, Adrian

Lampsius, who had sent out the expedition to the southern coast of Tobago in 1654, thought it prudent to acquiesce and to seek the protection of the Grand Monarque, from whose hands he received the title of Baron de Tobago.

Under the protection of so powerful an overlord the honest Dutch merchants probably promised themselves a period of peace; but in 1664 the Duke of Courland, who had been held a prisoner for some years by the King of Sweden, was released, and at once made use of his liberty to demand the restitution of Tobago from the Dutch. This was, of course, refused (among the prehensile folk of Holland it is not a national failing to surrender too easily that which has been once acquired), and the aggrieved Duke sought redress at the hands of Charles II. of England, of all unlikely allies. Charles, who like many other monarchs before and since was prepared to give away quite freely things which did not belong to him, presented the Duke with a grant for the island of Tobago, to which was attached the sole condition that it should be colonised exclusively by British subjects.

Armed with this document, the duke set to work to organise a filibustering expedition, certain merchants of London aiding him in his plans on a purely business basis; and in 1666 four vessels left the Thames, and, after a slight resistance, obtained

possession of the island—the Dutch Commandant and his garrison of 150 men being taken prisoners. In the same year the English admiral, Sir John Harnian, gained a victory off the shores of Tobago over the combined fleets of France and Holland ; Bloody Bay, so called from the colour of the water after the battle was ended, and its inlet, Dead Man's Bay, on the shores of which the corpses were washed up, remaining to this day to bear their serene and smiling testimony to the ruthless fashion in which the strife was waged.

The triumph of England in Tobago, however, was destined on this occasion to be short-lived, for before the year was out M. Vincent, the French Governor of Grenada, sent a tiny force of “five-and-twenty well-armed volunteers with two drums,” which, by what in modern times we should call a skilful piece of “bluff,” succeeded in cowing the British commander into ignominious surrender. This reads like a piece of quite recent history, and would seem to show that the gentle art of “hands-upping”—the journalists notwithstanding—is by no means a wholly *fin de siècle* acquirement of our race.

The French, however, seem to have attached but little importance to Tobago, save as a means of “scoring off” the English, for possession of the island was suffered to pass once more to the Dutch, after the French had destroyed by fire all the buildings then existing on its shores. Six years later the British,

under Sir Tobias Bridges, swooped down upon Tobago, took it from the Dutch, and carried away more than 400 white prisoners and a similar number of negroes; all of whom, it is probable, were distributed, according to the gentle custom of the time, among the British plantations, there to work out the remainder of their lives as slaves, without distinction of rank or age or sex or colour.

In spite of this "regrettable incident," however, the Dutch, with characteristic tenacity, speedily resettled Tobago, and the new colony was flourishing apace when, in 1677, the sturdy Hollanders found that they had to deal with yet another enemy. The foe this time was France, a filibustering fleet of that nation, under the command of the Comte d'Estrees, making a sudden descent upon the island. As luck would have it, several Dutch ships were in port, and fierce battle was done between them and the French vessels, what time a formidable landing-party from the latter delivered an assault upon the Dutch stronghold ashore. From both encounters the Hollanders emerged triumphant, d'Estrees losing his ship, the *Gloriam*, of seventy guns, which was blown up, while two other smaller vessels were stranded, the landing-party being at the same time defeated with a loss of 350 men killed and wounded. It was, in fact, what is popularly called a "bad break" from d'Estrees' point of view, and that wise man was quick to recognise the

fact. He stayed only to pick up as much of the broken bits as could hurriedly be garnered, and then set sail for France without more ado, though home-comings in those days had few attractions for the discredited hero. France, he knew, however, would not lightly accept such a blow in the face as the Dutchmen had dealt her; but a thoroughly efficient weapon must lie ready to his hand if the blow was to be returned with interest. Nothing could be effected with his now shattered forces, and to prolong the struggle would only be to consummate the defeat he had already sustained. Accordingly his ships lurched off towards the east, and presently the sky-line shut down over their mast-heads and hid them from the sight of the victorious Dutchmen.

The struggle had been fought in ruthless wise, and the Hollanders had suffered in ships and men—had suffered heavily. They knew themselves to be cut off utterly from their base, as was the reckless fashion of that adventurous age; they knew that it was vain for them to hope for reinforcements; they knew that a Frenchman who has been wounded in his national pride is the ugliest kind of Frenchman you can have to deal with, and they knew that the pride of d'Estrees and his fellows had been rudely mangled. The horizon to the eastward had swallowed him: all too soon it would yield him up once more—refreshed, strengthened, renewed—to fight another and a bigger

fight with the balance of advantage heavily on his side. These were not cheerful reflections wherewith to solace the hours of suspense and preparation for the little band of lonely Dutchmen, and their commander, Mijnheer Binks, must have found that they gave *furieusement à penser*. The Dutch ships drew off to seek some safe careening place, and Mijnheer Binks and his fellows set themselves grimly to the work of making preparations for the fight which was like to be the last that many of them would ever see.

He seems to stand forth to-day, a very real and a very human figure, this resolute Dutch commander with the comic-opera name, and as I rode through the isle which witnessed his victory, which was the scene of his anxious vigils, which saw him fight his last fight, and which hides somewhere in its green breast the forgotten grave in which his bones were laid to rest, I could picture him to myself so clearly that it seemed to me that his grim ghost might well be supposed to haunt the land in which he passed so many strenuous days. In imagination I could see him, a sturdy, squat figure with tall, widebrimmed hat, lank locks, splay features, an ample coat of a sad hue, and boots with loosely sagging tops, jolting on his mule up the hillside, outlined clearly against the calm blue sky. Up and up I watched him go, his head bowed in thought, until, the summit reached, he

drew himself erect, and, shading his eyes with one hand, scanned closely the sky-line to the east. Many a time he must have passed thus, weighted with the burden of many cares, hoping against hope, and bearing with grim fortitude the dull pang of a painful suspense, what time his fellows down below in the valley toiled day and night to make strong their poor defences. And at last, upon a certain day, as he looked seaward for the hundredth time, the ships of d'Estrees rose stately out of the placid waters of the Atlantic—stately and over numerous. The time of agonised waiting was past, suspense was ended, vain hopes lay dead; for Mijnheer Binks and those who trusted in him the tremendous hour—the hour that comes once, but only once, to every man—had sounded!

It was a fierce little rough-and-tumble that followed, for the Frenchmen had the memory of a defeat to efface, and the Dutchmen had their backs against the wall,—a position which, as many of our countrymen know, makes the Dutchman an ugly customer to tackle,—but the event was a foregone conclusion. Mijnheer Binks “and most of his officers,” as the passionless chronicle has it, were wiped out of existence, many men were slain and wounded, and prisoners to the number of three hundred were borne away to France. The whole business was completely wanton and aimless, however, for the Frenchmen seem

to have been actuated by no desire to possess Tobago, and abandoned it of their own free will barely two years after the day which had seen Binks and his followers fight for it to the death.

The news of this evacuation appears to have filtered through to Europe, for in 1681 we find the undefeated Duke of Courland once more asserting his claim, and the worthy merchants of London City promoting a company—as we should term it to-day—to exploit Tobago. The chairman of the company, one Captain John Poyntz, went to the length of visiting the island, quite after the fashion of the modern globe-trotting chairman of companies, and on his return (still in humble imitation of a later age) he wrote a flaming account of its beauty, its fertility, and its resources—a prospectus, in fact—and offered to an adventurous and gullible public 120,000 acres of magnificent land on an island whose area is roughly some 75,000 acres! The widow and the orphan and the country clergyman and other guileless souls doubtless embarked their sixpences in the speculation, after the manner of their kind in every age, and with the customary result, for settlers were not forthcoming in any numbers, and the enterprise proved a failure, though I have my suspicions that Captain John Poyntz, unless I misjudge his business acumen, proved to himself triumphantly that the labourer is worthy of his hire.

Two years later the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle was signed, and one of its provisions declared the little island of Tobago—which so many European nationalities seemed to desire, while no one of them was capable of holding it for long or of making any particular use of it—was declared once for all to be neutral territory. Neither the French nor the British appear to have accepted this decision altogether loyally, but it was not until 1748, some sixty-four years after the conclusion of the Treaty, that the former again attempted to plant a colony on the island. M. le Marquis de Caylus, the French Governor of Martinique, took the infant settlement under his protection, passed a law authorising French subjects to colonise Tobago, and promised that they should have his support if it became necessary to defend them from aggression. Mr. Grenville, the Governor of Barbadoes, forthwith issued a proclamation summoning the French settlers to withdraw, and sent a British frigate to the island to protest against the action taken by France. These prompt measures had the desired effect; the French Government disowned the Governor's action, and for the moment the colony was withdrawn. Only for a moment, however, for very shortly afterwards the French secretly and unostentatiously re-established their settlement.

Nevertheless, Tobago fell into the hands of the

English in 1762, during the war with France that broke out in 1756, and by the treaty, signed in Paris in 1763, it was at last formally declared to be a British island.

Tobago, now for the first time formally recognised as a British colony, was included under the Governorship-in-Chief of the Grenadines, and the English addressed themselves to the task of its administration in their usual businesslike and methodical fashion, albeit that was an age when savagery still underlay the thin veneer of the white man's civilisation, and ill things were done during the decade that followed—things the bitter memory of which will not quickly die.

On November 12, 1764, the first Lieutenant-Governor of Tobago landed with his private secretary at King's Bay. The Lieutenant-Governor was a certain Mr. Browne, his *âme damnée* was a Mr. Gibbs,—delightfully commonplace names, with a sound British smack about them,—and to me they present themselves as wonderfully incongruous figures set ashore thus fortuitously on the shores of that lovely bay which is, as it were, a tiny corner of Paradise.

Later, the Windward Road,—along which, as men in Tobago tell you to-day with admiring wonder, the Napiers were wont to drive their four-in-hand up hill and down dale headlong into Scarborough,—skirted

the coast, climbing the promontories and dipping down into the bays for the whole length of this island. Now, in an age less glorious, the road has shrunk to a bridle-path, and following this you come, when some thirty odd miles out from Scarborough, to the landing-place made memorable by the coming of Messrs. Browne and Gibbs. As you go, your sturdy island pony climbing up the stiff grades with the agility of a lamp-lighter and sliding down the steep pitches with all four hoofs together like a monkey-on-a-stick, you pass through bowers of greenery where cocoa under spreading shade-trees is replacing sugar, where coco-nut palms lift their fronds on high, where stately rubber-trees cluster on the banks of streams, and through the villages—packs of negro huts in elaborate dilapidation surrounded by ragged food-plots. Leaving one village, redolent of stale fish and other misfortunes, down below, with the yellow sands and the calm sea before it, and the banks of foliage behind, you clamber up the ascent, and as you halt to breathe your pony you look out and down upon the typical Tobagonian view. King's Bay, Pirate's Bay, Bloody Bay, Dead Man's Bay, Englishman's Bay, Man o' War's Bay—it matters not which of the half a hundred indentations wherewith the long coast-line of Tobago is scalloped—each one of them presents a picture complete in itself, and that picture lives in the

memory as the lovely, petulant face which this sunny island presents to the stranger that greets her.

Inshore the line of the main range rises, covered with forest—the “high woods” of the West Indies—majestic and wonderful, albeit they lack the tremendous splendour, the mystery, the compelling charm, the brooding melancholy of those dear Malayan woodlands which were for so many years my home. Threading its way among the coco-nut trees, down in the sandy bays before you and behind, runs the narrow brown thread of bridle-path which, quitting the flat, plunges headlong into masses of greenery and is lost. Again, before you and behind, the bay on either side is enclosed by a bold bluff rising sheer from the sea, the foliage covering it almost to the water’s edge, presenting to the blueness of the lapping waves a wonderful contrast of colours. Halfway out in the bays, perhaps, stand small groups of black rocks, and as you watch, the sea, which all the while lies seemingly motionless, heaves its waters slowly against their dripping sides, and draws them off again in broad circles of white foam, amid which the blue of the waves pales suddenly to a wonderful azure. For the rest all is placid and motionless. The palm-fronds droop inert; no leaf stirs amid the cocoa or the shade-trees; the broad shovel-spears of the bananas are held aloft, glistening ever so faintly in the sunlight; the king-of-the-woods, conscious of his gorgeous

raiment, and the little brilliant fly-catchers, which hunt in couples, sit so fearless upon the branches overhead that you could touch them with your outstretched riding-whip;—in the negro huts, in the sky, and on the placid sea all is peace, save where the pelicans tumble and dive, and the little, spiteful gulls, no bigger than sandpipers, rob them insolently of the fruit of their clumsy labour. All is profoundly still, a hushed peace as of deep slumber under the quiet sunlight—still, and peaceful, and beautiful exceedingly; but with the hint of sadness—the keynote, or so it seems to me, of these West Indian isles—underlying all.

And see, here, too, are graves—graves of Tobago's prosperous past,—for yonder, down in the valley, a high chimney-stack, its ugliness mellowed by age and tragedy, points a beseeching and incongruous finger heavenward from out a mass of trees and palms. Struggle down into the valley and draw near to that monument of lost endeavour, and you will emerge suddenly from the tropics into a tiny fragment of the dear Home country—

Here is England made with hands,
Wrought with pain in alien lands,—
 An England very pitiful and drear;
For some exile's heart sank low,
As he toiled here long ago,
 And to-day the grave of all his hopes lies here !

The little bright-faced river, hustling down from the green slopes inland to the freedom and the slavery of the sea, is dammed by a mighty wall of masonry—hoary, moss- and lichen-grown masonry, such as you may see in any county in England where the old water-mills stand idle. A little lower down stream other solid walls arise, fencing in a big farmyard, flanked by barns and houses of unmistakably English pattern—(in the cosy homestead yonder you have had your shooting-lunch half a hundred times, you are tempted to believe)—and in the centre, standing too solidly, too squarely to earn the name of ruin, rises the factory, crowned by the tall chimney-stack.

Time and Tobago ! Time and Tobago ! In fancy you can see the bustling black hostlers putting in the team which is to draw the Napiers' coach on a mad scamper into Scarborough ; the chimney belches smoke ; the big carts lumber into the yard loaded high with the stalks of green and yellow canes ; the crowds of negroes laugh and call and howl ; for a moment Sugar again is King once more—the old, cruel, ruthless, wanton, man-compelling monarch, the monarch who here lies dead with that tall, unused funnel of masonry as the monument above his grave !

Such is the place in our time at which the first English Governor, the unknown, but doubtless respectable, Mr. Browne, set foot in Tobago, and such

are half a hundred other spots on the coasts of this fertile, this beautiful, this obscure but historic island of the West.

The rule which Mr. Browne's coming inaugurated endured for seventeen years,—an unusually prolonged period, judged by the standard of previous occupations,—but even in this little space Tobago justified its reputation as an isle of unrest. Three insurrections of slaves took place between 1770 and 1774, and these were punished literally with fire and sword, though the order was reversed, the poor tortured wretches not being led to the stake in the marketplace of Scarborough until they had been made the victims of savage loppings and mutilations. One ringleader, it is recorded, was hanged in chains, and took seven days a-dying, and this was but a sample of the brutality wherewith punishments were meted out to the uncivilised by the “civilised” race.

One morning, at Roxborough, I lighted upon a tiny negro hut in which, curled up to sleep upon a plank, was an infinitely wrinkled hag, who presently was aroused into a palsied wakefulness, and in the curious, high-pitched singsong of an earlier day spoke to us of the past. Her daughter, a bent and withered crone who supported her own faltering steps by leaning upon a long staff, had been a full-grown lass and marriageable, she told us, on August 1, 1834, the day of Emancipation. Put her age at that time at

seventeen years, and suppose that her mother bore her at a like age. That—the lowest probable computation—makes Henrietta, the elder, no less than 104 summers. But she claimed to be far older than this, for her earliest recollection, so she averred, was the talk that spread through all the country-side of the savage doings in Scarborough in the terrible year 1774! It is more likely that she only remembered the talk which still passed in hushed whispers during her girlhood of those fearful doings; but in a land where there still exist aged folk who claim, at any rate, to have been alive when those awful punishments were wreaked, the memory of such wrongs dies out but slowly.

The position occupied by the white colonists in the West Indies was peculiar, and presents a strong contrast to that filled by the European filibusters and traders who overthrew the empires of the East. The Portuguese, and in a minor degree the Spaniards, were the forerunners of the three great European rulers of Asiatic lands—of the Dutch, the British, and the French; and though the peoples of the Iberian Peninsula have left behind them in Asia a name little creditable to the white race, the fact that their successors adopted different tactics was due, in the first instance, to policy rather than to principle. The Portuguese, with a start of some three-quarters of a century ahead of their rivals, had had in the

beginning nothing to fear from competition, and had felt themselves free to act in whatever ruthless manner the fashion of their age and the degree of contemporary civilisation approved. Bigots of fanatical type, they hated the "Moors" and the pagans with a deadly hatred, as beings foredoomed to the eternal wrath of God. They regarded themselves, in some sort, as children of Israel, who did well to spoil the Egyptian. They made the broad seas of the East uninhabitable to native craft; they tortured such prisoners as fell into their hands, for the greater glory of the God of the love of one's neighbour; they insulted the religions of the Asiatics whenever the opportunity occurred; they sought to make proselytes by the convincing thumb-screw and the argumentative rack; they held that honour did not compel faith to be kept with the infidel; and in less than fifty years after Da Gama had wrestled his way round the Cape, they had made the name of the white man to stink in the nostrils of the Asiatics, and had dragged the reputation of the "higher" race through seas of blood and dirt and crime.

It was when this had been accomplished that the crafty Dutch and British traders first came upon the scene, and they at once perceived that their best chance of success depended upon their power to persuade the Oriental world that "Codlin's the friend, *not* Short!" To do this, it was necessary, on every

occasion, to mark as strongly as possible the difference between Dutch or British methods, and those of the Portuguese, wherefore a scrupulous respect for native customs, religions, rights, susceptibilities, and prejudices was observed by the newcomers. The East was quick to recognise the distinction thus carefully drawn and so persistently emphasised, the Asiatic kingdoms welcoming the Dutch and the English—not because these nations themselves inspired affection, but because they shared the common hatred of the “Portugals,” and were milder in their dealings than the earlier filibusters had been. The ultimate result of the alliances formed between numerous Asiatic Powers and the Dutch and British trading companies the map of Asia shows in uncompromising distinctness to-day; but the conciliatory and liberal policy generally adopted by Hollanders and Englishmen alike served to wipe out, at any rate in some measure, the stain upon the white man’s reputation which the doings of the Portuguese had left, and laid the foundations for that prestige, that respect for, and that confidence in the white man, *quá* white man, which are the secrets of the seeming miracles that are wrought to-day by our race in Asiatic lands.

In the islands of the West Indies the position was wholly dissimilar to this. The Dutchman, the Englishman, the Frenchman, no one of these found a strong native race whom it was necessary and politic to

placate by liberal views, by toleration, by fair dealings ; and, sad to say, the necessity being lacking, the elementary virtues which have borne such rich fruit in the East were conspicuous by their absence. The “native” population, as it would have been called in Asia, consisted here of imported African slaves,—men who had been captured at the muzzle of the rifle, torn from their poor homes and from their terror-stricken kindred, sold and bought like beasts of the field, and now were set to toil through all their lives in the service of those who regarded these islands as their heritage. Since the slaves were property, and valuable property at that, their owners had a fairly strong incentive to feed them well and to tend them carefully, wherefore maltreatment was the exception rather than the rule. The miserable part of the miserable system was, however, that good or bad treatment was something that depended solely upon the caprice, the character, the whim, the temper, of each individual owner, and it is notorious that the temper of the average white man in the tropics is the least dependable thing in the world. The slaves themselves were not yet a generation removed from savagery ; they were cursed in ample measure with the curse of Adam, the which is an abomination to the savage of all races of every land ; they were possessed by a brooding sense of wrong and of injustice ; and they outnumbered the whites by more

than five to one. Now and again, as for instance in Tobago between 1771 and 1774, their savage discontent burst forth into pitiful insurrection—pitiful because so unsuccessful, so childish, so uninspired by imaginative genius, so barren of strategy, of cohesion, of organisation. And on each occasion the little handful of whites, finding itself in the position of Frankenstein, in that it had brought into being a Monster, infinitely strong, infinitely destructive, over which it feared to lose all control and at whose hands it was like to perish, stamped out these spurts of rebellion with a barbarity which, while it indeed might well serve as an object-lesson to the least imaginative of primitive peoples, has left stains upon the white man's honour that nothing can efface. It is to events such as these, and to the evil and unhappy system which made such happenings almost inevitable, that I think to trace the innate suspicion and distrust of the white man, because he is a white man, which still lingers in the hearts of so many of our black fellow subjects in the West Indies. It is the exact antithesis of the sentiments with which in the East our countrymen are in general regarded.

In 1770 the first cargo of sugar was exported from Tobago, but five years later cotton cultivation took the place of cane, the latter having been almost entirely destroyed by a scourge of ants. In 1778 a scourge of yet another character threatened to fall

upon the shoulders of the little colony, the United States fitting out a filibustering expedition for the conquest of the island. The hostile fleet of two full-rigged ships, three brigs, and a schooner fell in, however, with a King's ship, the *Yarmouth*, of sixty guns, commanded by one Captain Vincent, who proceeded to drub it in a fashion at once businesslike and complete. For the moment Tobago was saved, but in 1781, after a most spirited defence by the colonists under the Lieutenant-Governor, Mr. Ferguson, it was conquered by an overwhelming force of Frenchmen, and by the treaty signed in Paris on September 3, 1783, the island was ceded to France.

Comte Arthur Dillon,—it is flattering to our national pride to recall that France, from time to time, has had to borrow for service in her colonies men whose forebears, at any rate, hailed from across the Channel,—was the first French Governor, and one of his earliest acts was to grant a representative to Scarborough in the House of Assembly. During the British occupation Georgetown, of which to-day not a trace survives, had been the capital of Tobago, but Scarborough was gradually coming into prominence, and was destined presently to become, and to remain, the chief town in the little island. It was here that the French garrison was quartered, and here in 1790 a mutiny broke out among the troops, in the course of which Scarborough was burned to the

ground. In August of the same year a terrific hurricane wrought much damage to the island.

The French occupation had therefore been marked by more calamity than success, and on April 15, 1793, a British force, under Admiral Sir John Lefroy and Major-General Cuyler, landed, and after a slight resistance, which lasted but a few hours, retook the island on behalf of his Majesty King George. The Colony was forthwith erected into a separate Government, independent of the other West Indies, with a Governor-in-Chief, a Legislative Council appointed by the Crown, and a House of Assembly composed of elected members. Once more Tobago settled down under British rule, though the island and its inhabitants, one would think, must have been rendered almost giddy by the bewildering frequency with which they were called upon to change their flag and their masters.

The only incident of note that broke the monotony of this second occupation of Tobago by the British was a threatened outbreak among the slaves. This appears to have been planned more systematically than its forerunners, and all was in readiness when General Carmichael, the officer commanding the troops, got wind of the coming trouble, and acted with the promptness, and with something more than the ordinary resource, of the forthright Englishman of action of those days of frequent emergency. Before

the storm could break he had captured thirty of the ringleaders, and without loss of time hanged one of them on the yard-arm of the signal-staff. When the body had been lowered, it was again run up after a decent interval, attention being invited to its reappearance by the firing of the signal-gun. This operation was repeated again and again, and always with the original corpse, until to the cowering people, looking on from a distance in terror and awe while they winced at the booming of the signal-guns, it seemed that all their thirty leaders had been hanged by the neck by the stern old general. There is a certain grim humanity about the *ruse*, and certainly this was a case in which one man might well be made to die for the people: also one is glad to note that during this second occupation of Tobago by the British the unspeakable barbarities of an earlier age were discarded. The would-be rebels surrendered or dispersed without more ado, and the Legislative Council passed a vote of thanks to General Carmichael, who probably received a similar token of gratitude (albeit unspoken) from nine and twenty very severely frightened men.

But the game of battledore, in which Tobago played unrestingly the weary rôle of shuttlecock, was not even yet at an end, for by the Treaty of Amiens, signed in 1802, the island once more became French territory. The surrender of themselves and their

property into the keeping of France by no means commended itself to the worthy colonists of Tobago, but the difficulty was smoothed over by the wisdom of Napoleon, who caused his intention to leave the constitution of the island unchanged to be immediately made known, and by the tact and courtesy of M. le Général Sabuquet, who was selected to fill the post of Governor. The popularity of the latter is attested by the fact that the Legislature voted him, not only the £3330 per annum which had been enjoyed by his English predecessor, but presented him further with a personal grant of £4000, which was bestowed upon his widow when the Governor's death prevented it from being placed in his own hands.

The appreciation of Napoleon's treatment of them which was felt by the colonists is further illustrated by the unanimous vote which Tobago returned on November 25, 1802, in favour of his election to the post of First Consul for life, and it seems strange to-day that this half-forgotten British Colony should have had a voice, no matter how small, in so momentous an event in French and European history.

Less than a year after this vote had been given,—in June, 1803, to be accurate,—war between England and France having broken out once more, a combined naval and military force, under the dual command of Commodore Hood and General Grinfield, invaded the island, met with but a slight resistance, and easily

induced the successor of Sabuquet, M. le Général César Berthier, to capitulate on the condition that his little garrison of some two hundred men might be suffered to return to France. From this time onward Tobago has remained in the undisturbed possession of the British Crown, though it was not until 1814, when the Treaty of Paris was signed, that it was finally and formally ceded. Seven years later, encouraged by a feeling of security such as had never before been experienced for long by any nation in its tenure of Tobago, the foundations of the Government offices in Scarborough and of Government House—both of which buildings are still standing and in occupation—were laid.

Tobago now settled down to a period of prosperity and wealth, and presently was exporting some 3400 hogsheads of sugar per annum and over 1500 puncheons of the famous Tobago rum, the which to-day is not to be had for love or money in all the West Indies. On August 1, 1834, the slaves throughout the West Indian islands were emancipated, a system of apprenticeship being established in the place of slavery, and four years later freedom, entire and unconditional, was conferred upon the negroes. But sugar was still king, lusty and strong and jovial; Tobago rum was reputed the best in the world and fetched prices to correspond; public and private incomes alike left little to be desired; also, peace had

come at last upon the troubled land. Accordingly for a space Tobago ate, drank, and was merry, forgetful of the morrow, and dreaming not at all that her monarch could ever die. Planters kept open house; splendid teams galloped into Scarborough with the coaches rocking and swinging at their heels; men and women feasted and danced and loved and married; and the wheels of time sped onward to a gay, glad tune. Even the lament of the estate-owner, whose letter is still in existence, reads in our time like a fairy tale. "Sugar at £60 the hogshead!" he wrote in exclamatory grief, "God help the poor planter!" Now hogsheads are no more, but their equivalent is valued in shillings, and a phrase which was meant to be pathetic is instinct to-day with the grimmest irony. But for a space Tobago rioted and was glad, and one Governor, jovial soul, broke his neck as he drove from Scarborough to Government House on his way back from a public ball,—broke it, too, in a place where one would fancy that a sober man could not, after expending all his ingenuity, have succeeded in breaking so much as a finger-bone!

Time and Tobago! The former has worked such ruin in what was once so rich and so fair. As you look out over that green and smiling land, you can mark to-day the ravages that time has wrought—the wastes of rank grass where once the cane-fields

crowded, the tall chimneys of deserted factories, the ruinous walls of houses crumbling to decay. Tobago contributes now a wholly inappreciable fraction to the sugar output of our time; and when the fall in prices led to the abandonment of broad estates, which of old had been veritable gold-mines to their owners, the labourers thrown out of employment opened tiny food-plots where once the tall plumes of the canes had been wont to wave. Thus was brought into existence a numerous class of very small peasant proprietors, men who live in rude grass-thatched shacks—just a few boards huddled together and capped by enough roof to keep out the best of the rain—set amid banana trees, mango topes, and crops of maize and yam. Food has become cheap, but poverty has become universal—not the grinding poverty of cold and famine, but the poverty which too often means dirt and squalor—and the trouble of this is twofold. The small proprietor devotes the cream of his energies to the cultivation—somewhat grudging and perfunctory—of his own land, yet what his labour produces is insufficient to enable him to do more than support himself and his family in a fashion but little in advance of that which satisfied his forebears in distant Africa. The peasant-proprietor of Tobago is thus forced by circumstances to restrict his desires and smother any ambitions which he may entertain. He can only live—exist, is the better word; he can

have no hope of change, no prospect of improvement in his condition or of advancement in the scale of civilisation. He is cribbed, cabined, and confined by the hungry bellies of his family, by the labour that is needed to assuage their demands, by the poor return his roughly handled food-plot yields to him, and above all by an inherited tradition antagonistic to toil done for a wage and to strict contract time at the behest of a master. Yet the man who does not advance may not stand still: he must go back, he must retrogress. There is no rest on all this weary world, no inactivity that does not speedily become transformed into active degeneracy, and this is the fear that must be entertained for a people placed in the peculiar position occupied to-day by the small peasant-proprietor of Tobago. Meanwhile the planter cries out for labour, and too often he cries in vain. Until that "divine discontent," which is the beginning of all improvement, has been awakened in the soul of the average Tobagonian, even the most sympathetic and the most sanguine are tempted to despair of his future.

Yet the people are as a whole both peaceable and law-abiding. A mere handful of police is needed to supervise the scattered villages and to keep order in the quaint little town. The crime list is not a long one, and the principal offences are prædial larceny and destruction of property. Both of these are

survivals of a past in which slavery prevailed. The picking of another man's fruit or garden produce, the plucking of ripe cocoa from the branches which hang so temptingly within reach, are termed "taking," not "stealing," by the local negro, and date back to the period when the slave regarded his master's gear as to some extent his own, and when the cutting of a few canes was of no moment on the broad sugar estates. Similarly, the destruction of property was, in the old days, the only remedy which the slave had when he looked around him for some means of retaliation against his master. To-day the Tobagonian who has a grudge against his neighbour continues the practice as at once the surest way of "getting even" with his enemy, and as the sin which it is most difficult for the police to bring home to roost.

All up and down the little island the spires of churches and the big rough buildings which are elementary schools are to be seen pricking up through the greenery. Since 1781, when the Rev. Walter Carew, the first clergyman of the Church of England to set foot in Tobago, landed on her shores, many missionaries of many types have laboured among her people. Of these the Moravians, who established their mission in 1789, appear to have been the most successful and to have obtained the most satisfactory results. The church and mission-house at Moriah, perched high among the hills overlooking the broad

waters of the Atlantic, form a picture which will live in my memory as one of the most charming in all this lovely isle. The road winds up the hill, wriggles through the clusters of villages—more comely and more prosperous-looking than most of their fellows—and skirts the foot of the eminence upon which the church stands. It was a Sunday morning as we rode up the steep incline, through the dappled light and shade of the foliage, and the roadway was filled by knots and streams of negroes and negresses in holiday attire, armed with massive bibles and prayer-books, walking to worship with a certain plodding, resolute gravity, what time the bell rocking up aloft in the little steeple filled the world with Sabbath sound that recalled the memory of quiet summer mornings in the dear Home country. It was a happy, peaceful scene, and the people of Moriah and its neighbourhood had turned out in full force, from the grey and wizened mannikin who remembers, and on occasion can talk fluently of the days of slavery, and the old, bearded imported African, who was landed from a captured slaver in 1851, to the little trotting negro boy, magnificent in a bowler hat many sizes too large for him, a duck coat and pants, and boots of enormous proportions. The brightly coloured turbans of the women, and the gay scarves across their breasts, contrasted brilliantly with the sunshine playing on the varied tints of the greenery around, and for once a

West Indian scene was vividly picturesque. That is a quality which, to eyes gluttoned by gazing for years upon the glories and through the glamour of the East, is here apt to be replaced over frequently by what appeals to them as merely the bizarre and the grotesque. Charles Kingsley could never have written with the fine frenzy of enthusiasm which inspires "At Last" if, instead of coming direct from the sad-coloured commonplaces of Home, his eyes had first been filled with seeing amid the marvels of Asia.

The Rev. Theodore L. Clemens is the head of the Moravian Mission in Tobago, whose agents are here reputed to be in closer touch with the peasantry of the island, and to know their character and their needs more intimately than any other body of men. For something like twenty years Mr. Clemens and his companions have dwelt in Moriah, have spared no pains, have shrunk from no sacrifice that would enable them to win the sympathy and the shy confidence of the people. They have toiled with an energy undaunted by frequent disappointment to instil into their flock the principles which should make for their spiritual and temporal welfare. They have laboured to introduce to them the blessings of a higher civilisation, the foremost of which, paradoxical as it sounds, is the curse of Adam. They have sought to inspire in them that true spirit of self-respect which does not confound courtesy with toadyism, independence with

rudeness, honourable toil with the degradation of slavery, respect for authority with abjectness, nor discipline and obedience with a lack of proper pride. It is the most difficult lesson that a man can set himself to inculcate in a land over which still hovers the dark shadow which is the memory of that cruel and evil system that wrought such wrong aforetime—a system that has left for our inheritance to-day such deep distrust and suspicion of the white man and all his ways and works. Yet Mr. Clemens and his fellows have in part succeeded. Their lads, trained in their schools under their eye and influence, are self-respecting youngsters, who think too well of themselves not to show courtesy to others. They have in them, too, so men tell me, the seeds of ambition—a desire for better things—and they are prepared to work hard for the purpose of satisfying their aspirations. The very village of Moriah, by the contrast it presents to the other hamlets of the island, shows that its people are not content with what satisfied their forebears; that they mean to have better houses, gardens more carefully tended, fruit-trees cultivated with a greater skill, good food to eat, and good clothes to their backs when they turn out for worship at the invitation of the chiming bell. Yet for all the success, failure bulks big, and its existence may not be denied. Even such men as Mr. Clemens are brought up short now and again by that hard ring of suspicion which

surrounds the heart of their people, and in one matter, upon which they have spent their energies in unremitting prayer and exhortation, but little improvement is visible. The celebration of an honourable marriage—an event which is all too rare—is accounted by the good missionaries the highest triumph, the most inspiring encouragement to renewed effort; a fact which tells its own story of the heart-breaking difficulty, and the constant disappointments which beset their work.

The Wesleyan Mission dates from 1818, the Roman Catholics began their operations somewhat later, and all Churches are impartially supported by contributions by the State. The majority of the people, however, are members of the Church of England; and the only prayer that was addressed to me by an aged bedridden man in the almshouse of Scarborough was that “the Word of God” might be preached to him at least once a-week, while the old centenarian, of whom mention has already been made, was troubled about nothing save with regard to a doubt she entertained as to whether she had ever been christened! Tobago, too, is a strictly sober land, for in all the island outside Scarborough there are only two licenses for the sale of intoxicating liquors!

From being a Government of such importance in the West Indies that the officer administering it was proud to pass on promotion from Trinidad to Government House, Tobago, the island, after having been

grouped with the Windwards, ruled from Barbadoes, and after having been bandied as aforetime from hand to hand, has now definitely been declared to be a Ward or district of Trinidad, and is regarded by the latter proud and prosperous isle somewhat in the light of a poor relation. It is a profitable arrangement for Tobago, since out of her superfluity Trinidad is able to bestow substantial aid upon her needy neighbour, and for the rest Tobago pins her faith to Time. Where of old sugar grew in plenty, forests of rubber and cocoa under shade-trees are coming into existence. Scottish and English planters are taking up estates, and are grappling with the difficulties of the labour problem. Nature favour those who woo her in this bounteous land, and to-day, albeit the shadow of her adventure-some and splendid past still lowers over her, belittling the present, hopes for her future run high.

Time and Tobago! What pranks the years have played with her! What a shuttlecock of the nations she has been! What a world of endeavour, of struggle, of victory, of defeat, of joy, and of suffering has been crammed into the story of this little sunny island! and now in the fair dawn of a new century yet another chapter in her history seems about to open. Tobago for the last few decades has been lying, not dead, but sleeping, and presently she will awake into new strong life. Already she is stirring in her slumber, and soon, I think, she will begin to play once more something of

her old vigorous part in the doings of the West Indies. Time and Tobago! Time and Tobago! Time has given, Time has taken away; presently, I am convinced, Time will give once more good measure pressed down and running over, and then will come to her

“For all her sorrows, all her tears,
An overpayment of delight!”

THE STORY OF JOSÉ RIZAL, THE FILIPINO

THE peoples of the Malayan stock, who of old were the dominant race in parts of the mainland of south-eastern Asia and in the neighbouring archipelagoes, have seemingly been marked out in an especial manner to be the victims of a strange variety of experiments. Collectively rabbits, it is popularly supposed, fare worse than other members of the brute creation at the hands of vivisectors, and similarly the Malaysians, above their fellows, have seemingly been selected by the caprice of Fate to fill the patient's bench in a vaster laboratory. But here the shining scalpels are religious systems and rival theories of administration, and the blood let flows, not from individual veins, but from the heart of a people.

Malayans in different localities and at various times have been converted to Hinduism, to Muhammadanism, and to Christianity: some have been conquered and ruled by the Dutch, by the British, by the Portuguese, by the Spaniards, and now the

republicans of the West are trying to induce a section of this Oriental race to accept the citizenship of the United States as its eventual destiny.

During the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, the faith of Muhammad spread gradually from Âcheh in Sumatra to the islands of the Celébes group and to the Sûlu Archipelago—which geographically forms the southern extremity of the Philippines—thus gaining a long start in the race from its rival Christianity. The magnificent teaching which bids men believe in a single Deity is a conception that appeals strongly to the Malayan imagination, wherefore the new creeds quickly submerged the rude pantheism of the Malaysans, and as easily thrust Hinduism into remote corners, such as Lômbock and Bâli, where it lingers still in bastard and degenerate forms.

The Cross was first planted among a Malayan people in 1521, when Magellan cast anchor in the harbour of Cebu, and proceeded, as was the fashion of his age, to spread the religion of love of man's God and his neighbours by the aid of some of man's least amiable devices, such as thumb-screws and the like. It was not until 1565, however, that Legaspi landed in Luzon, and with the help of a handful of brave Spaniards and his band of redoubtable Augustinian friars, set about the conquest of the archipelago in the name of His Most Catholic Majesty. And here a

seeming miracle was worked, for in six years the whole of that vast group, the islands of which are variously estimated as numbering between 600 and 1400, had been brought under the Spanish yoke. It must not be thought that this was accomplished solely, or even mainly by the sword—though battles there were in plenty—for the real conquerors of the Philippines were not the Spanish knights, but the dauntless friars who penetrated alone into every cranny of the wilderness, and risked their lives joyfully if thereby they might add yet another soul to the tale of those whom their devotion had already redeemed from paganism.

The Malayan peoples of other lands had accepted the Muhammadan religion freely, without any save moral compulsion: their fellows in the Philippines welcomed Christianity no less gladly, and during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the toiling friars wrought a wonderful and a splendid work among this heathen race. Great were the gifts they brought—the belief in one God, the tremendous message of Christianity, the law of the highest altruism, a new wisdom, a wider knowledge, and also a little human learning wherewith to combat ignorance in the dark places. Wherefore, in the beginning, the friars—each one of whom, the saying went, was worth a battalion to Spain—laboured strenuously in the islands, giving and taking hard knocks with the best

when such things were going, but conquering for the most part by the sheer force of their exalted faith, their large charity, their quenchless enthusiasm and their splendid self-forgetfulness. Unwearyingly they strove to elevate the people, to wean them from their ancient way, to bring light into the darkness, to lead men's minds to higher things, and their devotion was rewarded by a wonderful success. Moreover, since self-sacrifice ever breeds love for those on whose behalf the sacrifice is offered, the friars learned to love the people, became their champions, standing between them and the oppressive civil rule, and wielding a vast influence which, in those early days, was used wisely, moderately, and for the good of the native race. Theirs is a glowing page in the stirring history of missionary endeavour, and very romantic are the figures of these lonely men wrestling bravely in the wilderness against all the hosts of Apollyon, and claiming a sure victory in the name of the Master they served so faithfully. Presently we shall have to examine the effects of clerical rule in the Philippines in its later developments, and that indeed is a sorry tale, but it is well to remember the glorious deeds in which it had its beginning, and the brave and selfless men who unwittingly laid its foundations.

Meanwhile, the natives of the Philippines, albeit converted to Christianity *en bloc*, continued to be primarily Malaysians, being Christians only in the

second place, and as it were by accident. "*Soyez toujours nègre!*" Maréchal MacMahon is reputed to have said to the young negro officer to whom the great man had been asked to speak a few words of encouragement, and "*Soyez toujours Malais!*" would seem to have been the injunction addressed by Nature to the Malayan peoples when first she fashioned them. Whether they be Christians or Muhammadans, their natural religion has been overlaid, not replaced: many of the superstitious practices of their pagan days survive; the *letter* is held in vast awe, the *spirit* is regarded by them as a thing of no account; through everything there crops up the ineradicable tendencies of a people wedded to fantastic beliefs and at bottom essentially unmoral. And similarly, no matter what the rule under which they live, the Malaysians are themselves unaltered. In the Philippines contact with a decadent Latin race may have helped to exaggerate their failings; intercourse with the Dutch, whose laws have made the curse of Adam compulsory, may have lent to some a false appearance of energy; but no external influence can really combat the innate weaknesses of the race. Therefore they remain, in the face of all foreign endeavour, be it secular or religious, as inefficient, as indolent, as improvident as of old, men who lack initiative, continuity of purpose, power of combination, self-control, and all other things that spring from physical or mental energy, and in no

portion of the Malayan family was this eternal sameness of the race more marked than among the Christian Filipinos under the sway of Spain.

All their vices were intact, as also were their characteristic limitations and ineptitudes. They knew enough to be aware that they were ill-governed, but the philosophical patience, the inborn fatalism of the Malay, asserted itself, and caused them, melancholy and unresisting, to endure the seemingly unendurable. Now and again some maddened native would break out into a furious revolt, as aimless and as ultimately ineffectual as the deeds of the *ámok*-runner, but his action aroused the sympathy, not the co-operation, of his fellows, and the examples which the Spaniards invariably made of all *filibusteros*—would-be reformers—tended to discourage agitation, for your Malayan, in spite of his improvidence, is not without a certain measure of prudence. For the rest their superstitions, their inertia, and their feebleness of purpose held them spell-bound, while their lack of education made them pathetically inarticulate. Yet from the hopeless mass of this people, impotent, suffering and dumb, on a sudden there emerged a man who not only could see through their eyes, feel with and for them, suffer every pang that wrung their hearts, but who also was gifted with a voice wherewith to speak in such fashion that men should not choose but hear him.

This man, José Rizal, the son of full-blooded Filipino parents, was born at Calamba on the island of Luzon in 1861. His parents, unlike the vast majority of their compatriots, were sufficiently wealthy to be able to give the boy an education altogether superior to that which usually fell to the lot of a Filipino, but though in this direction fate favoured him, it was his own gifts, and not mere fortuitous circumstances, which enabled him to stand forth, conspicuous and alone, as the one man of Malayan race who has ever displayed commanding ability. Standing thus isolated, it must be confessed that he is to be regarded as a "freak," an abnormal development in no sense typical of his people; yet he was through all, and in spite of all, a Filipino of the Filipinos, differing from his fellows only in that he possessed the power to formulate and the energy to voice their inarticulate thoughts. From its very rarity and strangeness the character of this original Oriental—this brown man with the sensitive brown man's heart, yet with the logical mind and the force of utterance that belong to the European—affords a study of more than common interest, while the cruel tragedy, which prematurely ended his life of brilliant promise, surrounds him for all time with a halo of romantic pathos. In ages long hence, when perchance the stars and stripes may have vanished from the Philippines as finally as the red and yellow bars

have done in our own time, the name of José Rizal, patriot and martyr, will still live in the rude folk-songs of his people, and the story of his strivings and his death will be related in many a Filipino hut by the brown folk grouped around the wooden betel-boxes. And when the history of the great Spanish conquests is written in full—that history so compact of heroism and of valour, made glorious by such mighty deeds, defaced by such appalling crimes, that history which must tell how Spanish greed and inefficiency so pathetically lost all that Spanish daring and recklessness had won—what will be the final judgment? For my part I think that the bloody work, wrought that December morning on the Lunetta at Manila, when in the name of Justice punishment was wreaked on the insolent “Indian” *filibustero*, will rank perhaps with the torturing of unhappy Montezuma’s gallant successor, and the piteous tale of the sufferings of Atahualpa.

José was educated in Manila by the Jesuits, and since all schoolboys are partisans, and love is ever fringed with hate, it may be supposed that he imbibed from his early teachers something of the hostility towards the monastic orders of which he subsequently made so open a display. The Jesuits, compared with the friars, were late-comers in the Philippines, and from the first a far from edifying rivalry subsisted between the two classes of priests.

The friars, however, triumphed, and at one time the Jesuits were expelled from the islands, nor were they permitted to return save on the condition that they should take no part in local politics for the future. With their powers thus restricted, these disciples of St. Ignatius Loyola devoted themselves to learning, science, and education. They made the observatory of Manila a place of world-wide celebrity which had not its like in Asia; in the Philippines they represented the van of progress and modern enlightenment: within certain limits they encouraged knowledge and sought to spread it broadcast among the people. Writing of them at a later date Rizal mentions, as a proof of how woefully the Philippines lagged behind the age, that while in Europe the Jesuits were regarded as reactionaries, they here were looked upon by the Clerical Party as dangerously advanced and revolutionary in their opinions and aims.

From the beginning, then, José obtained the best education that his native land could afford, but in 1882, shortly after completing his twentieth year, he was sent to Madrid, there to study for the profession of medicine.

At the Spanish capital he speedily distinguished himself, taking his degrees, as a Doctor of Medicine and as a Licentiate of Philosophy and Literature, with ease and credit. This accomplished, José

travelled extensively in Europe, spending periods of various length in Paris, Berlin, Brussels, London, and Rome, and making long tours among the lakes and mountains of Switzerland, and in the historic valley of the Rhine. By virtue of his birth he was bilingual from his infancy, speaking Spanish and his native Tagal as a matter of course. Ere ever he set foot in Europe he was already well-grounded in the Classics, and had acquired a considerable knowledge of the Japanese language and literature, having been drawn to this unusual branch of learning by his admiration for the dramatic and creative art of Great Britain's new ally. At Madrid he perfected his acquaintance with Latin and Greek, and picked up a certain amount of Hebrew. His degree taken, he next applied himself to the study of European languages, and quickly mastered French, German, English and Italian! He feasted with insatiable appetite and delight upon the glorious literatures thus thrown open to him, and that he was not content to be able merely to read and speak these foreign tongues with ease and elegance is attested by the fact that he found solace, during the years of his captivity, in writing a treatise on Tagal, choosing English as his medium of expression, though that was unquestionably the most difficult of the modern languages which he had acquired.

These things may fairly be reckoned respectable

achievements, more especially when it is remembered from a folk of what enfeebled stock Rizal had sprung, but the force of his character and the strength of his mental armoury are best instanced by the fact that he never suffered himself to become denationalised by long contact with men of sturdier stocks. Studying with sympathy, understanding, and enthusiastic admiration the history, the institutions, and the peoples of Europe, imbibing with avidity modern ideas on matters social, political, and economic, daily extending his knowledge in half a hundred different directions, enlarging his views, and heightening his ideals, he regarded all as a means to a definite end—the improvement of the sorry lot of his fellow-countrymen in those distant islands of Asia. The law of immutability which governs his race, applied also to him, its greatest son, albeit in a nobler fashion than is usual. He had been born and bred a Filipino of the Filipinos, and a Filipino of the Filipinos he remained: but Europe had trained his mind, and had equipped him with the very weapons that were lacking to his compatriots—a mind capable of grasping a political situation and suggesting remedies, and a tongue wherewith to plead his people's cause, and to tell the world the story of their agonies. In all his wanderings through places great in story—the civic battlefields of Europe where men have striven and died for liberty—the thought of his island home, far

away on the fringe of the Pacific, and of the brown folk, his kindred, melancholy, ignorant and sore oppressed, was with him sleeping and waking. Perhaps in these flawless days, ere ever bitter disillusionment had touched him, he looked out upon the world through the very sanguine eyes that are among the best gifts of youth, saw himself set apart to be the future liberator of his countrymen, and was thrilled by the joy of certain victory. For at this time Rizal's faith in his own strength and in human nature appears to have been quite pathetically firm and trustful. Europe knew little of the Philippines in those days—hardly so much as where the islands were situated—and this offended Rizal's patriotic spirit, but he never doubted that when Europe, and above all, when Spain had learned that which he had to tell, the white nations' innate love of justice, the public opinion and the popular indignation which he would arouse, would do the rest, and would suffice to work the miracle of reformation for which his soul was hungering. I like to think of the Rizal of that time, overflowing with hope, energy, and love of his kind, dreaming great dreams which then seemed to him so easy of attainment, and arming himself for the battle with such faith in the triumph that awaited him, and such joy in the consciousness of his own powers. It is good to dwell upon these golden days, and to remember that even from this man of many

sorrows the priceless treasure of happiness for a little space was not withheld.

After a sojourn of some three years in Europe, José Rizal conceived himself to have acquired the knowledge and skill that he needed to insure to the beginning of his crusade a fair prospect of success. Therefore he sat him down and wrote a novel illustrative of life in the Philippines which, in its original Spanish form, appeared in 1886. He called it "*Noli Me Tangere*," and explained the meaning of the title in the following dedication to his Fatherland which the book bore upon its flyleaf:—

"The history of human suffering reveals the existence of a cancer, the character of which is such that the slightest contact irritates it and causes the most acute agony. On every occasion when in the midst of modern civilisations, I have wished to recall your dear image, either for the purpose of solacing myself with my memories of you, or of comparing you to other countries, it has ever seemed to me to be devoured by a hideous social cancer.

"Longing for your health, which is our happiness, and seeking the best remedies for your sufferings, I will do with you what the ancients were wont to do with their sick : they exposed them upon the steps of the temple, so that all who came thither to adore their God might suggest a remedy.

"Also I will endeavour to describe your condition faithfully, without extenuating anything ; I will lift a corner of the veil that conceals your maladies, sacrificing everything to truth, even my love of your glory, but, as becomes your son, loving passionately even your very vices and weaknesses."

Such was the spirit, and such the object with which José Rizal, the Filipino, set about the task of writing, in the white man's speech, the tale to which he dreamed that all Europe would hearken. His was indeed the voice of one crying in the wilderness, and the sound of his strongest note died away faintly in the vast empty places, or was drowned by the tumult of the great busy world, which is more preoccupied than heartless. He fell into the error common to men who have dwelt much among books, and believed that words—mere impotent words—could work wonders: he lived long enough to learn how feeble were the weapons with which he had thought to overcome the forces arrayed against him. It needed something mightier than even his faith, his enthusiasm, and his love to win the unequal fight: his was a lost cause ere ever he hoisted its standard. In the end he succeeded only in sacrificing his all, without appreciably ameliorating the lot of his countrymen, or advancing the date of the millennium by an hour. Yet his was withal a generous endeavour, a noble folly, which took its rise in too trusting a belief in the innate goodness and justice of mankind, and may well kindle our admiration even if it also arouse our pity.

The tragedy and pathos of Rizal's own story has cast something of a glamour over his literary work to the confusion and bedazzlement of his critics. He

has been proclaimed as a genius; "Noli Me Tangere," and its successor "Il Filibustero," have been made the subject of almost hysterical praise; and quite recently a writer, who is usually a model of sanity and self-restraint, has committed himself to the statement that "the palpitating life in these stories can only be equalled in the best literature of other lands." This, it must be confessed, is "a big order," and the majority of sober-minded readers will be forced to admit that it overstates the case in a manner which Rizal's most sincere admirers must deprecate. He was a genius perhaps, not because he produced works of genius, but because, like Tennyson's "divinely gifted man," he "burst his birth's invidious bars;" and in truth it is barely possible to form a completely sane estimate of the value of his books as literature, so strong is the basis of astonishment that such work should have been produced at all by a scion of the Malayan race.

To me, after reading much that Rizal wrote with interest and sympathy, it seems that his novels are to be regarded, not as works of fiction, but as supremely able political pamphlets. He writes well, fluently, with point, occasionally with finish, not infrequently with a somewhat grim humour, but he lacks all power of construction; he can neither conceive nor depict a character that lives, as live, for instance, the characters created by Scott or Thackeray, or even Trollope, and his angels are painted with too glaring a high-light,

his fiends with too unrelieved a blackness. On the other hand, he knows and loves the Philippines and the Filipinos; he describes the lives of the people with detail, truth, and picturesqueness; and he has enough of skill and power to excite the interest of his readers in his impeachment of Spanish rule, and to quicken their sympathies for the brown folk who groaned beneath that tyranny. The plots, so far as these novels can be said to have plots, and the characters which are drawn upon their pages, do not matter; they are merely the pegs upon which Rizal hangs his indictment of things as they were in the Philippines prior to 1898. The books were written with a distinct purpose—the revelation of the sorrows and the miseries of his countrymen—and they should be judged solely by the measure of success with which they fulfil that end.

Turning, then, from the fiction to the facts contained in Rizal's novels, the pictures presented to us of the social condition of the Filipinos, and of the political state of the Philippines under the rule of Spain, must be briefly summarised. It is essential to a right understanding of José Rizal and his story that his published opinions upon men and things in the land of his birth should be examined and considered, and a full expression of these views is to be found only in his novels. "Noli Me Tangere" and "El Filibustero," in fact, are the *alpha* and *omega* of

his achievement; they are at once the glory and the pride of those who hailed him as their prophet, and the crown of his offending in the sight of the men who condemned him to death. Moreover, those who seek to weigh the rights and wrongs of Rizal's history must not only master the exact gist of his writings, but must also try to appreciate precisely what the publication of these books meant to the bulk of the educated Filipinos, and to the authorities who governed them. Here judgment must be formed by the aid of an impartiality at once dispassionate and critical, for the glamour, of which I have already spoken, that the final tragedy of his career has cast over Rizal and all his ways and works has again blinded his biographers, and has made of them, not sane historians, but fierce partisans.

His charges against the administration of the Philippines by the Spaniards are numerous, are illustrated by him with detail, humour, and pathos, and in the main must now be admitted to have been well founded. Yet he wrote with a strong bias, and with some bitterness, and this must be borne in mind by such as prefer truth, naked and unadorned, to stuff of a more picturesque and highly coloured character. His indictment divides itself naturally into two categories—the charges which affect the civil authorities, and those which are levelled against the Clerical Party.

With regard to the former, and beginning with the highest representative of the administration, Rizal maintains that the Governor-General, who held his appointment only for three years, and was liable to removal before the expiration of that term if he failed to give satisfaction, was powerless to inaugurate reform. Such an one might come out filled with grand and generous ideas, but he would speedily find that all his schemes and suggestions were met with the chilling statement that their originator clearly did not know and understand the natives. He would be forced to confess his own ignorance of such matters, in which his principal advisers professed to be experts, nor would he have any opportunity of supplying his deficiency in this respect. Therefore he would soon resign himself to accept the guidance of the men who had been long in the islands, and were determined to govern the Filipinos in the old evil way. Also he would recall the fact that his appointment had been obtained at considerable cost to himself, and that he would be a ruined man if he forfeited it prematurely, as he most assuredly would do if he persisted in the pursuit of any policy unpopular with the ruling classes. As the breed of Don Quixotes does not abound in these prosaic days, the result could not remain long in doubt, and successive Governors-General, no matter how keen their desire to relieve oppression and do away with abuses in the abstract,

were forced, after a few vain struggles, to accept the ignoble position of mere ornamental figure-heads.

The remainder of the Spanish *personnel*, the majority of whom were connected with the Government, are described by Rizal in a single brief paragraph—

“The Spaniards who come to the Philippines are unfortunately not always what they should be. Continual changes, the demoralisation of the governing class, favouritism, the low cost of passages and the rapidity with which the voyage can be made, are the cause of all the evil; hither come all the broken men of the Peninsula; if some of them be good, the country quickly corrupts them.”

All minor posts were openly bought and sold; every Spanish “dead-beat” who chose to cast up on the islands claimed to be provided for at the expense of the country—that is, of the natives—as a matter of right; an official who showed sympathy with the Filipinos, as against his own countrymen, at once excited the suspicion and distrust of the authorities, who quickly contrived his punishment or ruin. The cutting of the Suez Canal did much to stimulate the immigration of undesirable Spaniards, and Rizal represents a pauper of this description as being permitted to practise medicine openly, though his only qualification was that he had once swept out an infirmary.

“‘Leave him alone,’” the authorities are represented as saying to a doctor who protested against this abuse.

“Let him make his little pile, and when he has got together six or seven thousand *pesos*, he will return to his own country and live there in peace. How can it hurt you if he does fool these excellent dupes of Indians? Why aren't they sharper? He is a poor devil: do not take the bread out of his mouth. *Prove yourself a good Spaniard!*”

The incident itself may possibly be purely fictitious, but it is none the less typical; and the naïve cynicism of the words which I have italicised neatly epitomises the attitude of mind of the Spaniards generally with regard to the subject race. Remember that Rizal was himself a despised “Indian,” and you will find it in your heart to forgive him more than a little of his bitterness.

Apart from questions of the Spanish *personnel*, the indictment which Rizal draws against the administration of the Philippines is a heavy one. An armed police force, called the *Guardia Civil*, recruited from the natives and officered by white men, was organised in 1867 for the protection of the towns and *pueblos*, and for the suppression of outlawry and brigandage. It is notorious throughout the East that native police require constant and very jealous supervision by Europeans of high character if they are not to become a machine for the production of worse abuses than those which they are designed to control. There appears to be some quality innate in the brown man which prevents him from wielding authority with an

even hand if he be left to his own devices, and in British India itself, and in our other Asiatic possessions, our name is sold for a song all too frequently by the Orientals who serve us. Yet our system imposes all manner of checks and counterchecks, wherefore there is small room for wonder if, the Spanish officials being what they were, the *Guardia Civil* speedily became a scourge to the native population of the Philippines. Their persons were held sacred by the authorities; in the courts their testimony was accepted as conclusive evidence of the guilt of those whom they accused; they owed their places in the ranks to favouritism or to purchase, and used them for their own enrichment or for the satisfaction of their lawless desires and lusts. Their officers, too, were bent upon making their small fortunes, and were too indifferent and too callous concerning all that affected the natives to lend an ear to complaints preferred against their subordinates. It is said of the *Guardia Civil* that their oppression of the people made more outlaws and brigands than their zeal for the public safety ever brought to book. Rizal illustrates their methods by showing us half a dozen of the *Guardia* calmly threatening to open fire upon a party of picnickers, because the former believed that a man they wished to arrest had taken refuge among the pleasure-seekers. He tells us of an officer firing five chambers of his revolver at a

native who had frightened his horse and upset him into the mud. When in "Noli Me Tangere," two policemen visit the hut of a peasant woman on duty, they are represented as robbing her hencoop as a matter of course. In one horrible scene in the same book he describes a number of rioters being brutally tortured by an officer and his men of the *Guardia* in order to extort confessions from them that shall incriminate their associates. Subsequently the officer is promoted in recognition of his great services in this matter, and though the charitable may be disposed to hope that there is here some measure of exaggeration, it does not admit of a doubt that many cruel practices, which seemingly are so dear to the Spanish heart, were winked at by the authorities, and were resorted to in the Philippines up to the very hour of the final exodus.

Rizal also gibbets some questionable methods whereby the Government increased its revenues at the expense of public morality. The Filipino shares to the full the gambling and sporting instincts of the Malayan peoples, and his chief delight is cock-fighting which is made the occasion for extravagant betting. The Spaniards being a people who have clung to their bull-rings, in the face of the public opinion of Europe, can hardly be blamed for declining to interfere with the national sport of the Filipinos on the ground of its inhumanity; but not content with giving it a

passive countenance the government claimed a tenth on all the *stakes*, thus deriving a direct revenue from the vice which, more than aught else it is said, contributes to the moral ruin and the material impoverishment of the native peasantry. Even this, however, may not appear quite indefensible to men who know the East and the character of Orientals. Among certain races, the Chinese, for instance, the suppression of gambling is an Utopian ideal; practically it is impossible. Public gambling may be forbidden, but gambling will continue none the less though in secret places. Such surreptitious play, however, is more likely to be unfair, and so is more productive of trouble and bloodshed, than is gambling performed in a public place and under the watchful eye of the Government. Moreover, those who desire to play will easily find a means of corrupting a native police force, and this in an Asiatic land is always a very serious danger to the public. It is conceivable, therefore, that on these grounds of expediency the most high-minded administration may decide to legalise public play, but no extenuation of the kind can apply to the Manila State Lotteries, organised by the Spaniards in the Philippines, which set the best half of the Far East gambling furiously, in spite of the efforts of our own authorities to prevent the sale of tickets on British soil.

The Philippines, Rizal was never tired of declaring,

were full three centuries behind the age, and for this he rightly blamed the governing caste. In those Asiatic lands which are administered by white men the rulers must ever be greatly in advance of the bulk of the commonalty, and alas! the methods of the Spaniards were those of a people not wholly emerged from barbarism. One instance, added to the facts already given, will suffice to illustrate this contention. Filipino lepers were not segregated, nor were they even afforded material medical assistance by the State. They were not suffered to live in the *pueblos*, being forced to build themselves huts beyond the village limits, but no provision was made for their support, and these unhappy people roamed at large begging, and picking up such meagre doles as might be thrown to them by the compassionate. If in a moment of forgetfulness one of them broke any of the regulations which hemmed him about, if he touched ought that belonged to folk who were whole, if he approached too near to anyone, or if, maddened by misery and hunger, he stole that wherewith to assuage his famine pangs, the law punished him without mercy, and that punishment was by flogging! Think of it, a leper flogged! Could I cite anything that would bring to the average Englishman a keener perception of the stupid callousness and inhumanity which, during the closing years of the nineteenth century, disfigured the rule of Spain in her Eastern colonies?

It was greed that in the beginning beckoned white men into the new lands, but since then time has sped onward, and has brought to us purer ideals and higher conceptions of the end of the white man's being. Wherefore nothing can be held to excuse the failure of the Spaniards to understand the fact that the presence of Europeans in Asia, as a ruling caste, calls for some justification, and carries with it certain duties and responsibilities towards the subject peoples. A generous recognition of this principle, and a generous interpretation put upon the nature of the sacrifices which such recognition entails, are the only sure base upon which the rule of the alien in Asia can securely rest: when a Government and its servants become blinded to this great truth, their downfall cannot be long delayed.

But in the eyes of José Rizal it was the Clerical Party which did more than aught else to shore up an outworn system of administration, to perpetuate abuses, and to retard reform. In considering this, by far the gravest portion of his indictment, it is only fair to his adversaries to remember that, as we have seen, Rizal had received his earliest impressions of the friars from the Jesuits, with whom they were notoriously at variance, and also that his sojourn in Europe chanced to synchronise with an anti-clerical movement, which was at that time sweeping over the Latin countries, and cannot but have had a strong influence upon his

views. When every deduction has been made for personal prejudice, however, Rizal's case against the Clerical Party remains sufficiently damaging, and is, moreover, supported by a mass of independent testimony.

We have seen how those marvellous Spanish missionaries began their great work in the islands, in what poverty and privation they laboured, with what fearlessness and devotion they penetrated into the dark places, and how extraordinary was their immediate success. But, alas, time works with bitter irony, and while the centuries rolled onward, and the world advanced, the friars in the Philippines, who of old had kindled the torch of learning in this land of darkest ignorance, not only failed to keep step with their age, but lost also those very characteristics which had made their forerunners so glorious. Once in this raw wilderness they had been the champions of new things, the elevators of a barbarous people, the heralds of an ampler day: now they had become the haters of all innovation, reactionaries who threw themselves fiercely at progress's Juggernaut-car, and strove to clog its mighty wheels. Once the friars had gone forth into a wild land, poor, friendless and alone, there to fight a great fight for Christ's sake: now all this was changed. Wealth, organisation, permanency of appointment, and an ubiquitous representation throughout the country in the person of the parish priests, had

gradually transformed the Clerical Party into a force that nothing could withstand. In the beginning their influence with Spaniard and Filipino alike had been due to their utter selflessness, and had been used by them for the good of the community alone; but imperceptibly and by slow degrees the civil and religious administration of the Philippines had become, not so much welded into one, as inextricably entangled, and the Clerical Party, wedded by training and tradition to the old order of things, had learned to regard all agitation for reform as an assault directed, not against a mere mundane political system, but against the Church herself.

It is easy enough to scoff at such a preposterous pretension, but try for a moment to look at the matter from the point of view of the clerics. Since things political and religious now owed their vitality to the same force, and were so closely identified, it needed a man of unusually clear vision and impartial cast of mind to differentiate between the one and the other. Such qualities are not commonly developed by the *esprit de corps* which animates a regiment, be it military or monastic, and men must be supremely impersonal, detached and altruistic before they can begin to realise that the world will be the better for the elimination of the system for which they stand. It has been commonly assumed by writers on the subject that the Clerical Party in the Philippines was animated solely

by ignoble motives and unworthy temporal ambitions. Admitting to the full the stupidity, the ineptitude, and the tyranny of their rule, and being in no wise concerned to defend what I regard as indefensible, it yet seems to me that the action of the clerics in supporting the rotten Spanish administration, and fighting for it to the last, is capable of an explanation somewhat less discreditable than that usually accepted, when once it is realised how the religious question had become interwoven with those raised by political issues.

Briefly, the attitude of the friars was this. They regarded the Filipinos as an inferior people, easily led to perdition by the devil (as in sober truth are all Malayan folk), "brethren of the water-buffalo," as one monk called them, who must have their lives ordered for them in this world, if they were to win to the life which is eternal. Any attempt that was made to overturn the civil government could not but materially weaken the spiritual power which had come to be its very marrow, therefore all reformers were of necessity "irreligious." The priests saw that if the "brother of the water-buffalo" was fed with the *gram* of learning he was apt to wax "beany" and to kick, instead of bowing his neck to the yoke as a beast of burden should do. Wherefore, the schools being in their hands, the latter took every precaution to withhold a too liberal supply of the heating food. And the

pity and the irony of it all lay in the fact that these men were the successors of the very friars who had done such magnificent work in the islands in ancient days, who had been the apostles of learning and the champion of the native races. Cry out against the hideous wrong-headedness of it all, if you will, mourn over the miserable limitations of human agents, whose perverse ingenuity is equal to the task of converting the most splendid enterprises into such woeful failures, but do not deny to these unhappy men the sorry excuse of sincerity for all the mischief that they wrought!

Admitting then the sincerity, as also the narrowness of the view taken by the Clerical Party, it next concerns us to examine the means whereby they sought to stay the downfall of all that they held holy—for remember that the civil power was itself sacred in their eyes when once they had assimilated the belief that its collapse entailed the destruction of the Church of God. In all spiritual matters the priests had been accustomed to exact implicit obedience, for the very essence of the Roman Catholic Church is the infallible authority which it claims to receive direct from our Saviour through St. Peter and the Popes his successors. So long as submission was required only on questions of faith and morals, the unresisting Filipinos displayed a touching loyalty to their pastors, but it was here that the curse of the country—that hopeless entanglement of the spiritual with the political administration

—fell heavily. The Clerical Party had been placed, more by circumstances than by individual design, in a position which was radically false, and failing utterly to understand that such was the case, it followed that little by little they sought to exercise in matters temporal that unquestioned authority which Roman Catholics regard as vested in the priestly office. In so doing they were exceeding their powers and courting rebuffs, while they were endangering the security of the very Church which it was their desire to serve, by unwarrantably branding the widespread discontent excited by an oppressive civil administration as an “irreligious” agitation.

This was the first direction in which the Clerical Party came into violent contact with the people, for even the meek Filipinos were not prepared to endure the assumption by the priests of an infallible authority in things temporal which they only recognised as belonging to them in questions of doctrine and morals. But there were other issues concerning which the Filipinos and the Clerical Party were in acute conflict. In the course of centuries, by purchase, gift and legacy, many of the richest lands in all the thousand isles had passed into the possession of the successors of the once empty-handed friars, so that in a great number of parishes the monastic orders were the principal landlords. Now, as every Government servant knows, it is far more easy to be

grasping and hard of heart on behalf of an impersonal corporation than in matters where one's individual interests are alone concerned, wherefore the Church speedily earned and deserved the reputation of being a merciless landlord. The peasants grew to regard the rents paid for Church lands as a cruel tax—one of the many exacted by the civil power, by whose aid it was often collected from recalcitrant tenants. On the other hand the Clerical Party looked upon their wealth as a necessary weapon in the battle which was pending with the "irreligious" advocates of political reform, and no man among them seems to have been sufficiently far-seeing to recognise that the wonderful edifice, which the self-sacrificing friars of old had builded upon the affections of the people, was doomed to perish when once it had been transformed into a crushing burden that ground them into abject poverty. And indeed the want of foresight, the lack of all understanding of the essential elements of the problem with which the changing years had confronted them, was fatally mischievous to the cause which the Clerical Party had at heart. "You cannot serve God and Mammon,"—but in the Philippines the things that were God's and the things that were of Mammon had been suffered to get bewilderingly interravelled, and the priests were now engaged in the futile task of trying to do that which Christ Himself had declared to be for ever impossible.

The opposition of the Clerical Party to the spread of education among the natives has already been mentioned. Rizal tells us that in the schools the Filipinos were made to learn whole volumes by rote, of which, since they were written in Spanish, not a single word was intelligible to them. He shows us a village schoolmaster, who had tried to improve upon this by teaching his pupils the rudiments of the Spanish language, mocked and scorned and persecuted by the parish priest. He represents the parents of the scholars as keeping their children from school because the same master had abandoned the use of the rod, corporal punishment being universally regarded as by far the most important part of the curriculum. He introduces a ridiculous sermon into "Noli Me Tangere" for the purpose of ridiculing the gross ignorance of the priests, a fact which need hardly be insisted upon else surely they must have seen that a system which, in its time, had been an immense advance upon no education at all, was hopelessly antiquated and inefficient at the end of the nineteenth century. In another passage he speaks with bitter derision of the "little plays," acted in the *conventos* on certain feast-days, as the most violent concessions which the friars could bring themselves to make to the spirit of modern enlightenment. But the cutting of the Suez Canal which, ending the long isolation of the islands, had led to the

immigration of so many worthless Spaniards, also opened the door to a few Filipinos who had the means to defray the cost of an education in Europe. These were not numerous, but every one of them returned to raise wrathful cries of protest against the bondage of benighted ignorance in which his countrymen were held, and so gave to the people the consciousness of yet another grievance against the clerical *régime*.

But still the natives as a whole were dumb—pathetically dumb. The press was ruthlessly muzzled, the fiscal revising, editing, inserting, and deleting with merciless censorship ere anything was permitted to see the light of print. Rizal draws a painful picture of his countrymen, the accuracy of which my own acquaintance with this people amply confirms. He declares that they are ignorant and superstitious beyond belief; that they have degraded Christianity into a pantheistic idolatry, which has no sort of influence upon their conduct. He represents them as inert, sullen, hopeless, resentful, but cowed; in abject dread of laying themselves open to the accusation of disaffection towards the Government which they hated; afraid to possess books, since such things were suspect, and hastening to burn them at the first whisper of a danger threatening them. He marks their misery and their discontent; he watches them wasting their substance upon childish *fêtes* and

reckless gambling, seeking in such sorry distractions the forgetfulness that they may not find. But he sees, or pretends to see, that the hour of awakening is near at hand.

“Without liberty there is no light !” he cries. “You say you know little of your country, and I believe it. You do not see the struggle that is imminent, you do not see the storm-clouds on the horizon ; the battle already has begun in the sphere of ideas whence it will descend into an arena that will be stained with blood !

“Do you not see how all things awake ? The slumber has endured for centuries, but one day the thunder-bolt will fall, and the bolt, instead of destroying, will be the herald of life ; it is for this that new tendencies awake in our minds, it is for this that those tendencies, which to-day are separated, will unite under God’s guidance. God has not failed other peoples, He will not fail us. His cause is the cause of liberty !”

A fine mixture of metaphors, certainly, which, in spite of Hamlet’s famous speech, should hardly find a place in the “best literature” of any land ; but the meaning is clear, and it was the clarion note, sounded to an oppressed race in passages such as this, which made Rizal a prophet among his own people, and the hated foe of those who sought to still the popular outcry for reform.

Of Rizal himself, and of his personal attitude with regard to religious and political questions, his books supply some interesting hints. In spite of his long

association with the scholars of Europe, his own sturdy faith in the religion in which he had been bred does not appear to have been shaken. While waging fierce war against the priests of the Philippines, because they stood for the perpetuation of the abuses which he hated, he none the less remained a Roman Catholic.

"I am a Catholic," he writes. "I keep the faith of my fathers in all its purity, but I do not see why I should bow my head when I can hold it erect, nor why I should deliver myself up to my enemies when I am able to fight them."

The superstitious practices of his countrymen filled him with a scorn which he was at no pains to conceal, but throughout his books a sense of the consolation which religion alone can afford in the hour of trial, and of the elevating effect which its great truths have upon the mind of man, makes itself felt with all the force of a deep sincerity. Moreover, he bids the Filipinos remember the enormous debt which they owe to the friars who were the first to bring them the light of Christianity; he insists upon the fact that the ignorance, selfishness, and crimes of her agents and representatives are excrescences of a human growth, and have nought to do with the Church herself; but he adds that gratitude for ancient obligations must not blind the natives of to-day to the evils which the friars are now using all their influence to sustain.

Similarly, while inveighing mightily against Spanish misrule, Rizal proclaims his loyalty to Spain.

"Is it, then, impossible to reconcile the love of one's country with the love of Spain?" he asks. "I love my country because I owe her my life and my happiness, because all men must love their Fatherland: I love Spain because, in spite of all, the Philippines owe her and will owe her their happiness and their future."

And in another place he writes—

"My greatest desire is the happiness of my country,—happiness which I wish her to owe to Spain and to the efforts of her citizens, united to Spain and to one another by the eternal bonds of common views and common interests."

And once again, while dwelling on his loyalty to the Mother-Country, he whispers to her a word of warning—

"The Philippines do not think of separating themselves from the Mother-Country: they ask only for a little liberty, justice, and love. You are mistaken if, seeing all things dark, you think that the country is desperate. It suffers, yes, but it still hopes, it believes, it will not rise until it has quite lost patience."

We have now completed our brief examination of Rizal's books—the books whereby he was judged by those responsible for the administration of the Philippines. The accuracy of his facts has never been impugned, and the attitude of mind evinced by the

expression of his opinions appears to me to bear witness to the extraordinary quality of the man himself. Come of a plastic folk, he yet succeeded in maintaining his racial identity intact amidst the alien civilisations of Europe; his religious beliefs remained unshaken by the spirit of modern scepticism; but more wonderful still, this most anomalous of Asiatics, though of necessity a fierce partisan, was at once just and essentially moderate. Belonging to an Oriental people, who are at once passionate and impulsive, and as a rule can see no step between an abstract ideal and a blood-stained attempt to attain to it on the instant, Rizal persistently counselled legitimate agitation as the only line of action whereby the much-needed reforms might be secured: deeply imbued with the love of liberty, no suggestion can be found in his writings that it can compensate for the horrors of an armed insurrection. Had Rizal been the leader of his people after the Spanish-American war, his influence might perhaps have served to avert the miserable strife, which still fitfully continues, although the end never has been in doubt.

Yet Rizal's O'Connell-like attitude found scant appreciation in the Philippines. The Clerical Party caused his books to be publicly burned in quite the approved mediæval fashion, and branded their author as a heretic and a *filibustero*.

"To pass for a heretic is always bad," Rizal had once

written, "but to be known as a *filibustero* is still worse. It were better far to have upon one's conscience the murder of three tax-collectors, every one of whom possessed a knowledge of reading and writing!"

And, as we shall see, the sequel proved that he had not overestimated the gravity of the situation.

The publication of "Noli Me Tangere" had left Europe cold—that great unwieldy entity is not lightly to be heated into a ferment of excitement—but it caused a great stir in the Philippines. In spite of the efforts made to prevent its importation into the islands, the book was widely read, and when Rizal returned to Manila in 1887, he was greeted as a popular hero. The prudent-minded gave him a wide berth; the reckless, young, and advanced sections of the community hailed him with enthusiasm as their natural leader; the Government regarded him as a dangerous revolutionary, set upon overturning the existing order of things; while the Clerical Party, viewing him as the incarnation of the unspeakable turpitude of the native population, believed that the devil had entered into possession of this "brother of the water-buffalo" for the purpose of doing battle with the Church of God. Even in Germany, where on many topics people are not allowed to think, except in a whisper, the book might well have passed without serious notice from the authorities; but in the Philippines the ruling caste had become imbued with

the notion that the discontent of the natives took its rise, not in the shortcomings of the Spaniards, but in the innate moral depravity of a people whose colour permeated both their bodies and their souls. Soon, therefore, though Rizal seems never to have abandoned his attitude of moderation, he found it prudent to seek safety in flight.

In February, 1888, he set sail for Japan, whence, after some months devoted to the prosecution of his former Japanese studies, he proceeded to Europe, travelling *viâ* the United States. He took up his residence in London, and became known to a small circle of scholars and in the reading-room of the British Museum; but he had left his heart behind him in the keeping of the men of his own breed, and a gnawing nostalgia made him restless and unhappy. His early illusions had long ere this been stripped from him. He found himself surrounded by selfishness and indifferentism. He had fought and failed. His great dream had come to nought. He had raised his voice fearlessly, and had shouted his message in the ears of Europe; but Europe, huge, preoccupied, self-absorbed, was deaf to the cause he pleaded. On her horizon the woes of the land he loved were but a tiny speck. In melancholy exile he realised his own utter impotence to move her inert bulk, and learned the bitter truth that if the Filipinos were to be comforted in their agonies, relief must come to them from

within, not from the hands of distant sympathisers. Appreciating the weaknesses and ineptitudes of his countrymen, in spite of the love he bore them, this conclusion must have forced him to acknowledge how remote were the prospects of the deliverance which he had hoped to work at their behest.

Yet in those remote islands the spirit of discontent and unrest, of which Rizal had detected the signs as early as 1886, was growing with alarming rapidity. The Clerical Party, true to its *idée fixe*, attributed it to the spread of "irreligion," and confounding effect with cause, believed it to be in great measure due to the influence of Rizal's books. But though disaffection was rife, and the sullen resentment of the natives grew daily in volume, intensity and bitterness, the limitations of the Malayan character still held them in bondage. They lacked the unifying instinct of nationality, without which there can be no combined action of an effective kind. In many places furious, ill-managed little spurts of rebellion burst forth only to be repressed with ruthless hand by the Spanish authorities, for these outbreaks were sporadic, unconnected one with another, drew their inspiration from no central organisation, and so fizzled out ignominiously in bloodshed, suffering, and tears.

The governing caste viewed these happenings with some alarm, but with infinitely more horror and surprise. That the "brethren of the water-buffalo"

should dare to rebel appealed to them as nothing so much as a hideous insolence. It was in their eyes as though the lower animals had of a sudden begun to resent the servitude for which God has fashioned them. The bare notion of trying to prevent such outbreaks by adopting a policy of timely concession never so much as suggested itself to them in the light of a possibility. Anything of the kind would have been regarded by the Clerical Party as an abject surrender to the spirit of atheism—submission to the Prince of Darkness himself—while the less fanatical laymen underrated the gravity of the situation, since they had long ceased to be in touch with the native thought and feeling, and in any case would have feared to take any step which might be interpreted as a sign of weakness.

One of the most serious revolts occurred in Calamba, Rizal's native *pueblo*, and here the fire of disaffection was stamped out in bloody fashion. José, who from afar had watched events with an agony, which was rendered more acute by the fact that his banishment from his Fatherland precluded him from guiding his countrymen upon wiser lines, was unable longer to keep away from the neighbourhood of the Philippines. Knowing himself a marked man, he feared to return to the islands unless a guarantee was forthcoming that might ensure his safety, but he took up his residence in Hong-Kong,

and thence, on December 23, 1891, he made yet another attempt to aid the cause of his down-trodden race. On that date he addressed a letter, of which the following is a translated extract, to General Despujols, who at that time was in supreme command of the military forces in the Philippines.

"If Your Excellency believes that my feeble services might be useful to you to point out the troubles of the country, and to assist in healing the sore left open by the recent injustices, please say so, and I, trusting in your word of honour as a gentleman, and confident that you will respect my rights as a citizen, will immediately place myself at Your Excellency's orders. Your Excellency shall see and judge for yourself the loyalty of my conduct and the sincerity of my professions. If you decline my offer, Your Excellency will know better than any one what it is that you are doing, but I shall have in the future the consciousness of having done all that I could to preserve my country for Spain, by the bond of a solid policy based upon justice and a community of interests, without ceasing to seek her good."

The note here struck rings true, and taken in conjunction with the spirit which, as we have seen, animates Rizal's writings, will go far to convince the impartial that the author of this letter was not a mere revolutionary, bent upon casting off the yoke of Spain, nor yet a purely selfish politician who exploited his country's sorrows to serve the ends of a paltry personal ambition.

It is easily conceivable, however, that the Spanish authorities may have remained unconvinced of Rizal's *bonâ fides*, and indeed an intimate acquaintance with the character of his race may well be held to excuse some scepticism. Quite recently, since the occupation of the island by the United States, the American officials discovered to their bewilderment that certain Filipinos in whom they had reposed confidence, and whom they had appointed to various important executive posts under the new *régime*, were all the time holding similar appointments under the rebels, and forming a part of their secret machinery of government. Furthermore, it is on record that many of these gentry seemingly evinced an equal zeal and interest in the performance of their curiously incongruous set of duties! A race whose members are capable of playing a political farce of *Box and Cox* in such a fashion as this, and with a success and secretiveness that long defied detection, cannot reasonably complain if collectively they be regarded with distrust, but the Spaniards ought to have had sufficient discrimination to perceive that Rizal was hardly an ordinary specimen of his people. The fact is that throughout, in all their dealings with him, the Spanish authorities could not forget that the man was an "Indian,"—a creature of a lesser breed—human, it is true, yet far nearer akin to the beasts that perish than to the full-blooded white man. Viewed in this light

his offer of aid was in itself an insult, and any treatment that might be meted out to him was good enough for such as he.

Accordingly, to the lasting disgrace of himself, and of the civil and clerical authorities who countenanced his action, General Despujols deliberately set a trap for the *filibustero*. He accepted Rizal's offer with apparent gratitude, urged him to return to the Philippines as speedily as possible, and gave him all the guarantees for which he had asked. Relying on the general's good faith, and turning a deaf ear to the advice and entreaties of his friends, Rizal set sail for Manila in July, 1892, elated by the belief that a serious attempt to right the wrongs of his countrymen was at last to be made. A few days after his arrival he was arrested on the old charge of being the author of seditious literature, and was forthwith banished to the island of Mindanao, there to remain incarcerated during the pleasure of the Government! What further need have we of witnesses? No accusation against the Spaniards which is to be found in any of Rizal's books equals for atrocity the treachery and injustice of which the authorities were guilty in thus dealing with their author.

But here again the greatness of the man's character, and it may be something of the innate patience of the Oriental, came to his aid. At the age of one and thirty he found himself helpless in the hands of

relentless enemies, a victim of their perfidy, and in a fair way to spend the remainder of his days in dreary bondage. Yet his own troubles affected him far less nearly than those of his countrymen had done. He did not whine or rave; he raised no passionate outcry of protest; he did not even abandon the attitude of moderation which he had so persistently assumed; only he sought solace in study, and did what in him lay to better the lot of the ignorant natives around him.

Mindanao is mainly inhabited by the folk whom the Spaniards named "Moros," or Moors—Muhammadan Malays—a rude and savage race who gave but a grudging allegiance to the foreign sway, and had never completely accepted the yoke of Spain. They knew nothing of Rizal, and cared not at all for the cause for which he stood; his sorrows had no power to move them; they were indifferent to his defeat; his victory would not have affected them in the least degree. He was to them neither more nor less than an infidel stranger which the tide of fate had cast up upon their shore, and for such an one they had neither sympathy nor liking. Yet even here, in surroundings so unfavourable, the force of Rizal's remarkable personality, and his broad and tender love of his kind won their full meed of recognition. After much pleading he extracted from the authorities at Manila a permission to practise his profession, and he at once set about the task of tending the sick among the

semi-savage natives around him. Soon he had become the friend and counsellor of every family in his neighbourhood; he brought comfort and relief to the suffering; he spared women in travail the needless agonies which are superimposed by ignorance; he watched beside the dying; he made the lives of those about him better, sweeter, cleaner, in that he had entered into them. Presently the stranger and the infidel had become in all but name the uncrowned king of the land of his banishment.

Often his blood must have boiled when he remembered the foul treachery which had led to his captivity; as he roamed those rugged shores, and passed on charitable missions from hut to hut, the narrowness of his life, the weary monotony of it all must have lain heavy upon his spirit, and the memory of the sufferings of his countrymen, and of his own utter impotence to relieve them, must have set the vulture tearing at the great heart of this modern Prometheus. Yet, as some touching verses which he wrote at this time bear testimony, he at least for a space cheated himself into the belief that he was not altogether unhappy. Even Mindanao was a part of the Philippines, as such it was dear to him because it was home. Better this bondage in the islands of his ancestors than liberty in an alien land, he cries, the Malayan in him echoing, unconsciously perhaps, the proverb of his race—

*"Hujan āmas di nĕgri orang, hujan bātu di nĕgri kita, baik lagi nĕgri kita." **

Nor was he quite forgotten in his exile by those whom he had hoped to serve, for the island speedily became a Mecca whither, on the pretext of consulting the ablest doctor in the archipelago, many of the leaders of Filipino thought and nationality, and the foremost fighters in the army of discontent made pious pilgrimage. What took place at all these stolen conferences no man will ever know with certainty, but a leader of a secret society, the notorious *Katipunan*, has left it on record that, when he visited Rizal for the purpose of enlisting his sympathies, the prisoner deprecated any resort to violent methods, and entreated him to confine his efforts to agitation on constitutional lines. The books for which he was then suffering banishment give us every reason to believe that this was the consistent position which he never abandoned, and no facts or documents which have yet been made public have tended to diminish the force of this probability. Nevertheless, the interest and sympathy which, even in exile, José Rizal was able to excite in the hearts of his compatriots were viewed by the authorities with a not unnatural jealousy and suspicion.

For four whole years Rizal dwelt in banishment,

* "Though it rain gold in a foreign land, and though it hail in our own country, none the less is our own the better place!"

doing much good, of which the memory still lingers, and no evil that has ever been made manifest; but at last, in 1896, events occurred which seemed to afford him a chance of release. A devastating epidemic had broken out in Cuba, and the Spanish Government experienced great difficulty in enlisting the services of sufficient medical men to cope with the emergency. The duty was at once dangerous and unpopular, and few were found willing to risk their lives for the sake of a distant subject people for whom they cared nothing. José, however, at once volunteered, taking the opportunity again to reiterate the expression of his attachment and loyalty to Spain, and his keen desire to serve her. His offer, in spite of the angry opposition of the authorities at Manila, it is said, was promptly accepted by the Home Government, and on September 3, Rizal embarked for Barcelona on board the *Isla de Panay*.

The Clerical Party watched his departure with grave concern, for they had never ceased to attribute the disturbed state of the country to his evil influence, and to clamour for his condign punishment. Events which took place while he was on the high seas seemed to lend force to their contentions, for an insurrection, organised by the *Katipunan*, broke out on the island of Luzon, and assumed more threatening proportions than any of its abortive predecessors. The troops sent to compass its suppression met with

scant success. The Government found itself menaced at last by what looked like a really serious popular upheaval. The fact that Rizal's release should have so nearly synchronised with the outbreak was in itself suspicious, and it was only natural that the Clerical Party should have seen in this new development the hand of the arch-enemy. That there were solid grounds for this belief appears to me to be in the last degree improbable. Apart from the fact that the measures which he had advocated had always been of a peaceful character, Rizal was not the man to seek escape from the Philippines at the very moment when an insurrection of his planning was about to be raised.

The *Isla de Panay* reached Barcelona on October 6th, but the wires between Manila and Madrid had been busy during the three and thirty days which the journey had occupied. Fate, which sometimes loves a dramatic situation, had so arranged matters that Rizal should find his old enemy General Despujols acting as Governor of Barcelona. Before him the Filipino patriot was promptly haled, and at the end of a long interview, he was carried on board the s.s. *Colon*, which at once started on the return voyage to Manila. Rizal reached his destination on November 13th, and was then and there placed upon his trial on the charge of complicity in the late rebellion.

How far a case, such as would satisfy the exacting

demands of British justice, was made out for the prosecution cannot now be definitely known. There are stories current of incriminating documents hidden in Rizal's trunks by his political enemies, and other equally wild accusations have been made against his judges. To none of these things, however, am I disposed to attach much importance. By the Spanish law the burden of proof was made to lie with the prisoner; he was held to be guilty until he could prove himself to be innocent. Moreover, Rizal's writings were notorious; his judges were the representatives of that executive which his opinions had outraged; the Clerical Party sincerely believed him to be the sworn enemy of religion; and the outcry against Spanish methods which this "Indian" had had the audacity to make had brought to life the bitter racial animosity which is only felt in its fullest intensity by white men towards folk of a darker colour. In circumstances such as these what scope was there for abstract justice? When once José Rizal, the Filipino *filibustero*, was arraigned for trial on a capital count before a bench of Spaniards in the Philippines, it was plain that his days were numbered.

The Lunetta at Manila is the principal *rendez-vous* of the fashionable world. Here, during the brief hours of coolness, all the town assembles to drive and walk, and loaf and flirt, and take its pleasure in social intercourse, and here, in Spanish times,

criminals were publicly executed *pour encourager les autres*. It was on the Lunetta, therefore, that on December 30, 1896, José Rizal—patriot, statesman, and martyr, or rebel, atheist, and *filibustero* (for it was thus that the opposing parties respectively named him), was led forth to meet his death. It was early morning, and the bright sunshine of the tropics streamed down upon the open space, casting hard fantastic shadows, and drenching with its splendour two crowds of sightseers. The one was composed of Filipinos, cowed, melancholy, sullen, gazing through hopeless eyes at the final scene in the life of their great countryman, the man who had dared to champion their cause and to tell the world the story of their miseries: the other was blithe of air, gay with the uniforms of officers and the coloured frocks of Spanish ladies, the men jesting and laughing, the women shamelessly applauding with waving handkerchiefs and clapping palms, all alike triumphing openly at the death of the hated “Indian,” the “brother of the water-buffalo,” whose insolence had wounded their pride.

By special instructions—which were surely a refinement of cruelty—the men of the firing-party were drawn from a Filipino corps, instead of from a Spanish regiment as was the usual custom, and thus, at the hands of his own people—the people he had loved so well, and had so vainly tried to serve,—

José Rizal met his death and passed onward to the Judgment Seat that cannot err.

Turning away sick at heart from the contemplation of this bitter tragedy, one cannot but remember, with a thrill of almost vindictive satisfaction, that less than eighteen months later the Lunetta echoed once more to the sound of a mightier fusilade—the roar of the great guns with which the battle of Manila Bay was fought and won. That morning's tumult sounded the death-knell of Spanish misrule, and caused the destinies of the Filipinos (a people, who from their very nature, be it remembered, are incapable of autonomy), to pass into the hands of men of the sturdy Anglo-Saxon stock. What better guarantee for eventual liberty, one might think, could man desire? But alas and alas! Well, the end of the sorrows of the Philippines is not yet; and the fate of the Filipino still rests precariously on the knees of the scornful gods.

A DYING KINGDOM

“And who shall say what ignominy death
May have in store for us?”

WILFRED BLUNT.

THE sights which are presented by modern Asia seem specially fashioned for the purpose of stimulating the imagination. They are compact of strange paradoxes and unlikely contradictions. Here is a land of darkness under sun-glare, of idyllic simplicity and virtue cheek by jowl with vice, treachery, wickedness unspeakable, cruelty that is satanic, tyranny, misrule, oppression; a land in which barren places sprout into a new, strong life suddenly at a whisper of the white man's will, and kingdoms old in story decay and putrefy in unsightly abjectness and squalor. It is the battle-ground of the new and the old; the spot where modern things and things very ancient meet in the death-grapple; where antiquated notions of right and wrong, of fitness and unfitness, die hard, as old things are wont to die, and new ideas spring into being and flourish with the heartless insolence of youth. We white men know the good from the

bad. Our theories are the result of centuries of self-discipline, of education, and of deep thought. The customs and the kingdoms of Asia fall down before our trumpet-blast as did the walls of Jericho of old; and if we leave a train of broken things behind us, who among us shall dare to doubt that our revolutions tend to the greatest good of the greatest number?

None the less, obtrusive sentiment thrusts itself forward and will not be denied. If death be terrible, the act of dying is infinitely more awful to witness; and to any thinking man, who stands for a little space aloof from the moving life around him, and watches with tenderness and with compassion the throes and agonies which attend the passing of Asia's old and weary soul, the spectacle is one that reaches near to the kind fount of tears. The degradation, the plain-tiveness, the abject impotence of kingdoms which once were proud and insolent, overbearing to their neighbours, cruel to their foes, ruthless to all alike, and powerful and mighty with a strength that then defied rivalry, are felt to be things monstrous and contaminating. A man feels that by merely witnessing these kingdoms in decay he is committing an act in itself indecent and merciless; that to pry at ugliness which were better hidden from the light of day is an unpardonable cruelty; that, in a sense, the degradation is contagious; that a man is less a man because his eyes have looked upon things so unclean

and so repulsive in their death-agony. We all know the sick horror which seizes us when we see some hideous creature, maimed and mangled, twisting under foot in a detestable impotence of pain, dying, but dying with the slowness which prolongs and intensifies the acuteness of its misery. We all know with what a frenzied haste we strike, and strike, and strike again to end the horror, to put the writhing thing beyond the reach of pain. Much the same feeling possesses the man who looks upon a dying Asiatic kingdom during the last disgraceful moments of its repulsive existence. He longs to make it cease; to cleanse the world of this stain upon its fair fame; to wipe out hurriedly the mildew whose foulness seems to degrade humanity itself since it has spread its leprosy over a portion of our kind. And yet, behind all this passion of disgust there lurks another feeling, a certain tenderness and regret, born of that unreasoning love of ancient things, things with a glorious past, which all men know in greater or in lesser measure. Shadowy and unreal, the spectre of the past rises and hallows the meanness of the present. In imagination we see again the mighty kingdom dominating its world; we see the gorgeous elephants trooping through the streets; the bales of rich merchandise which made the wealth of the land; the serried ranks of the brown warriors crowding the *prâhus* when the King went forth to battle; and above all we see men ruling men, as

men were wont to be ruled in those raw and blood-stained days. Ichabod, Ichabod, the glory hath departed! But its glamour clings to the sorry rags of greatness, and its shadow hovers over them chastening the ugliness of to-day.

Not long ago I visited Brûnei, the moribund kingdom whose name, which has shared in its corruption, gave its title to the greatest island of the East. Disgust, horror, contempt, repulsion, and an unreasoning feeling of contamination, all held me in their grip as I viewed the miserable wreck of past glory. It seemed to me that the death-rattle sounded ceaselessly in my ears, that I could catch the faltering beat of a dying heart which once had pulsed so strongly, that the place looked upon me with glazing eyes that were like those of a creature in sore agony. My gorge rose at the dirt, the squalor, and at things worse than either, and infinitely worse than death,—death which may come in a moment of full fruition, the glorious consummation of a splendid life. And as the night fell, and the place sank to rest beneath the sad moon, which rising there had looked of old upon so glorious a past, the pity and the sorrow of the land rose too to haunt me like a spectre, until the flowing tide swirled about the keel and gave us leave to depart into the clean and open seas.

My little steam-yacht, rolling gently to the

rocking of the slow swell, thrust her nose through the long line of driftwood that marked the limit of the river's seaward flow, and entered the zone of paler water which surrounded the estuary of Brûnei. Behind us, seemingly afloat upon the quiet sea, lay little islands smothered in foliage to the water's edge; before us the mainland of Borneo rose in a tumble of low hills, grass-grown or spattered with secondary scrub, with line upon line of faint blue mountains set against the paleness of a white-hot sky. As we neared the shore and began to enter the river, grassy slopes on either hand seemed to run down to the water to meet us with a kindly welcome. In them we saw the first tokens of departed wealth. Once, long ago, the strong stream of emigration, which sets eternally from the crowded mud-hovels of Southern China, broke in numberless waves upon the western coast of Borneo, and Brûnei, the head and front of native kingdoms, absorbed the labourers and waxed fat upon their toil. All these packs of grass-grown hills were then thriving pepper-gardens or groves of rich spices, and the strong hands which ruled the lawless land secured safety for the folk who sought only riches, and were content to offer a liberal tribute. But later there arose weaker men, the effete offspring of a mighty race, and the geese, which of old had laid such golden eggs, were killed or plucked, till the survivors spread their wings and left the land to solitude, and to the spirits

of the jungle who are ever ready to resume their own.

The river-banks closed in about us, serried masses of vegetation clinging to the hill-sides which dipped to the water's edge. The forest was dense but mean; no single giant tree lifted its crest skyward; on every hand there was nothing but scrub, half-grown saplings, wastes of rank grass, little patches of bare, red earth, marking a landslip, a tiny clearing or two nicked out of the crush of bushes, and then more hills, more scrub, and more secondary jungle. The scene told its own tale of desolation. The virgin forests had been felled, every inch of the land had been cultivated, and abandoned foot by foot to the slow-creeping jungle. Those hill-sides, we knew, were filled with the memory of ancient tragedies, records of wrong and oppression, of murder and ruthless robbery; and Nature was even now slowly covering from sight the scenes of so much wickedness. I fancied, as I gazed upon the unsightly hills, that I could mark the struggle between the patient toil and endurance of the Chinese settlers,—the most bovine and long-suffering of our kind—with their narrow eyes fixed resolutely on the distant wealth they hoped at last to garner, and the avarice and cruelty of a degenerate race of Kings whose one desire was to live for the moment, taking no thought for the future or of the deluge which their folly was precipitating. Those scrub-set slopes represented a page

of obscure history which will never be written; a few lines on the long, long scroll which tells of the endless war between good and evil. As the yacht flew past, to me the memory of that record was a thing very real. The shores were peopled for me with ghosts, the ghosts of dead endeavour, dead hopes, cruel disappointments, grievous wrong; and the spirits of the patient dead seemed to mop and mow at me from the river's banks. Surely 'tis only in the East that a man may look upon a land wasted as is this, may see its tragic history written plainly on its face, may realise the human suffering which it records, and yet may know that the deeds which wrought its ruin called forth no torrent of execration, and passed almost unnoticed as the common facts of life.

A bend in the river, the banks still telling their tale of desolation, and the town of Brûnei lay sprawling upon the surface of the stream. Dust-coloured roofs of palm-leaf thatch of all shapes, sizes, heights, slopes, and degrees of crookedness, set at all angles, staggering in all directions, with a thin haze, the smoke of many cooking-fires, hovering above them like a faint mist,—such was our first view of the greatest native city in Borneo. The yacht forged ahead, cleaving the brown waters into even waves which turned to tawny yellow as the sunlight smote them; behind us the wake showed in a slim triangle flecked with foam and swirling eddies; then Brûnei

opened its ragged jaws and swallowed us up. To the right and left the same barren, green hills dipped to the river,—empty shores, steep and inhospitable, upon which no human dwelling held its foothold. In the river itself, narrowing the fairway, the clusters of huts which formed the town tottered upon rickety legs whose feet were in the mud of the bed.

“Queer folk, aren’t they?” said one of our number. “It looks about the last place in the world that a sane man would have hit upon as a suitable site for a town.”

Seen as a whole Brûnei seemed to sit upon the river’s face like some vast patch of dust-coloured weed. In detail it was composed of a perfect maze of narrow waterways hedged about only by the *nîbong* piles, set apart at irregular intervals, upon which the crazy verandahs and huts tottered uneasily. In each of these lanes boats rode moored to ladders by rattan painters; on either hand rose buildings fashioned of wood, bark, or palm-leaf, inexpressibly squalid, dirty, irregular, and picturesque. Here and there a long verandah, canted at a reckless angle, threatened to tip its crowd of human beings into the stagnant water below its uneven flooring; a ladder, lacking most of its rungs, led to a dark doorway, the only air-hole of a filthy interior; roofs rose to low elevations in serried jumbles; floors showed wide gaps which no man sought to repair; rubbish floated horribly upon

the river's face; decay peeped from every corner, was visible on every side, made itself manifest in broken rails, rotting beams, thatch that hung limply from ragged eaves, boats broken and unseaworthy, torn nets, floating pieces of mats, broached baskets, and the discarded flotsam and jetsam of several thousand households. Yet the place was crammed with life. As the yacht passed men, women, and children thronged out of every hut, crowded every verandah, climbed over one another on rickety causeways, jostled and shouldered on unsteady stagings. Faces peeped from narrow slits of window, budded forth from the gloom of doorways, peered at the vessel from under the arms and legs, or from above the bare brown shoulders of the crowd. On every hand children were seen in clusters, all seemingly of about the same age. One might be tempted to believe that there had been a heavy harvest of children garnered some six years before, and that none had been needed since, were it not that half the women in the crowds of onlookers suckled little squirming things with the open motherliness of the East.

From a pack of huddled huts upon our right, places as squalid and mean as their fellows, bearing like them their dingy marks of decay and rottenness, suddenly three calico flags sprang skyward to flutter at the tops of squat staffs. The yellow one in the centre marked the palace of the Sultan (Ichabod,

Ichabod! It were cruel to laugh!); the black one on the left was the badge of the Bëndêhâra, the principal chief, and the most evil of the King's many evil councillors; the other, which had once been white ('tis a colour that Brûnei seemingly abhors, and will not long suffer to maintain its pristine purity), served to indicate the dwelling of the Pangêran Pěmancha, a third chief of reputation no better than the colour of his bunting.

We looked around us mournfully: at the bare hills which bore stunted growths of sparse jungle, with one of their number here and there more thinly clothed in grass through which the red soil showed like a suggestion of pink flesh beneath a transparent veil of gauze; at the squalid clusters of unsightly huts; at the crazy buildings in which the corpse of departed state and greatness lay festering under the stained squares of bunting; at the ruin and the desolation, the filth and the decay; at the shattered ugliness, at the picturesqueness that in itself seemed to stand as a sure sign of degeneration from higher things. The words of the old chroniclers, those swarthy Spanish adventurers who sailed of old time so bravely into the Unknown, came to my memory, the tales they had to tell of that mighty Malayan kingdom upon which they chanced suddenly, after many weary days spent in wandering among the uninhabited or sparsely peopled islands of these Eastern seas; and the miserable

wreck before us made those words a mockery, a refinement of cruelty, like a merciless taunt thrown in the teeth of one dying in misery and utter abjectness. Was it credible that what is now a mere huddle of dilapidated hovels was of old time a city, so imposing and magnificent that it filled the stout souls of even those hard-bit filibusters with awe and wonder? Was it possible that the men who had sailed with Magellan should willingly have squatted on the floor in the presence of the Emperor (they loved high-sounding titles, did those grandees of the open sea), doing obeisance to his majesty after the humble native fashion, nor felt that their action was an abasement of their race, a degradation to the colour of their skins? As I looked upon the shattered remnant of the Brûnei of their day, it seemed impossible that such things should ever have been ; yet, if men spake truly, the marvel of that new-found land was sufficient when at its zenith to command their ready homage. Now, long since, the gorgeous palaces have crumbled into ruin, the ruins themselves have melted into dust, the passing wind, the flowing waters have scattered even the *débris* to the hungry sea ; and to-day we behold, not Brûnei, the land of ancient story, but its shrivelled mummy and the grey ashes of its empire. The old, strong race of fierce Kings has passed away with the palaces in which they dwelt. The puny sons of that once mighty breed, the men who wield so

feeble a sway in our time, are the mere lees left in the cup which held so potent a draught of kingly blood.

And yet these changes have not been wrought by disastrous war, by famine, or by pestilence. They have come about gradually, and by the twin action of time and of decay; they are the result of vice, consistent avarice, short-sighted folly that bartered its birthright willingly for every proffered dish of savoury taste, and the degeneration consequent upon centuries of self-indulgence, lack of self-restraint, and loss of self-respect. Personal pleasure has been the fetish of King after King. To glut the maw of this idol all things have been ruthlessly sacrificed. Fragment by fragment the vast territory, which was once the thrall of Brûnei, has been bartered for shining dollars to the pale-skinned folk who once came so humbly into the royal presence; river by river the land has passed away from the hands which could not hold it in their feeble grip; till at last the Rajah of Sarawak annexed Limbang, which is the *hinterland* of the ancient kingdom itself, diverted the last thin trickle of trade to his own neat station, and "broke the rice-pot of the King." Then, when it was too late for action, the horror of his loss was made manifest to the Sultan, and he whined and prayed, and wrung his hands in his impotence, weeping like a woman, and no man heeded. Thus empire and territory, power

and magnificence have vanished, and all that remains is an old, dull-witted man sitting amid the ruins of his town, seeking vainly the pleasures which he can no longer enjoy, and breeding idiots who represent in their hideous persons the accumulated vice and degradation of centuries.

A messenger from the palace brought me word that the Sultan was awaiting me in his hall of state.

"Thy Friend saith," quoth the messenger, "that his heart is very glad because of thy coming. Had thine arrival been delayed, thy Friend would certainly have departed this day from Brûnei in order that he might seek thee in Labuan, and all things have been made ready in preparation for his journey."

"Cut the throat of a fowl with a knife, and the throat of a man with sweet words," I said, quoting the vernacular proverb. "The Sultan had no intention of leaving Brûnei, is it not so?"

"True, *Túan*," answered the messenger.

I knew that the Sultan did not dare leave his shrunken kingdom even for a few days, lest on his return he should find that his throne had been wrested from him by some faction of his intriguing court. I was aware that, with this fear in his eyes, he had not summoned courage to risk stirring from within the narrow limits of his palace for nearly a dozen years. The fact was notorious; I knew it, the King knew that I knew, and the herald also was quite abreast of

the situation. None the less, the conventional falsehood tripped glibly from the latter's lips, and only the faintest flicker of a smile played about his features when the inevitable detection exposed the emptiness of the royal message.

The gig was brought alongside, and our party rowed ashore—no, not ashore, for there is no such thing at Brûnei; we rowed to the lop-sided ladder, toothless with age, which leads to the long causeway giving access to the hall of state. Above our heads, as we looked upward at the *nibong* stagings, brass swivel-guns grinned at us from unexpected corners. Some, with muzzles fashioned like the heads of dragons or of gnomes, glared at us through hideous eyes under tangles of metal mane, their fierce jaws agape; others of more conventional pattern, thrust sullen noses out of gloomy patches of shadow; others again lolled on clumsy wooden carriages at the end of a crazy pier, with a dozen men fumbling about them making ready for the customary salute. With some difficulty and with little grace of attitude we clambered up the unsteady ladder, and stepping warily over yawning abysses of broken flooring, beneath which black and slimy mud-banks were visible, we picked our way towards the presence-chamber.

“It is just as well that the royal *levées* are not largely attended,” said one of the company, “or the whole thing would resolve itself in a gigantic

mudlark, and the loyal populace would be floundering about down below there like 'poor old Jack in the water' at the end of Brighton pier."

The perilous causeway ended in a mean building with a patched roof of corrugated iron. It consisted of a single oblong room, measuring some forty feet by twenty, broken up by a double row of pillars running parallel to one another down its entire length. At the far end there was a tawdry throne, like a dilapidated sedan-chair, covered with tarnished tinsel and garish paper soiled and torn. Behind the throne a narrow curtained doorway led into the interior of the palace; the remaining three sides of the room were open to the air save for a low balustrade some two and a half feet high. Over the end of this which adjoined the causeway we scrambled, and a fat, pale-faced man, who somehow gave one the impression of complete sexlessness, waddled forward to greet us. He wore a cotton kerchief on his shaven poll, a flowing coat of white embroidered with tiny gold stars, a high yellow silk waistcoat, a huddle of silk cloths about his waist, and long silk trousers extending to his splay sandalled feet. The clasp of his hand was nerveless and slack; his skin was sodden to the touch like a fish that has been too long out of the water. His face was broad and shapeless, hanging in flabby folds, creased and wrinkled by time, weakness, and vice. Having shaken hands with each one of us in

turn, he waddled back up the room, and subsided in a limp heap on to a chair which stood a little way to the left of the throne. This was the last and feeblest of Brûnei's Kings.

The place was crammed with tables, like an auctioneer's show-room. On the left hand stood a row of chairs which were presently occupied by a crowd of dingy royalties; on the right were other chairs set ready for our accommodation. A tattered carpet was underfoot; a soiled linen ceiling-cloth hung low above us as a tent; the whole place, with its upright pillars and its flutter of sodden curtains, resembled a large, old-fashioned four-poster bedstead. The ragged officials of the palace squatted in knots on the floor around us.

A native sauntered in and set a vast candle down in front of me; another handed round a tray on which cigarettes, a foot long, rolled in yellow palm-leaves lay partly concealed under a grimy cloth; we lighted them, and fired slow compliments at one another like minute guns, between the irregular detonations of the swivels at the pier-head. Then men brought, in cheap Birmingham cups, coffee that was apparently compounded of *cau sucré* discoloured by gritty ink. We solemnly put it to our lips, but the experience was one that might not lightly be repeated. Then the talk rose in feeble flutters, like the flight of a bird with a broken wing, rose to fall again, lost in a despondent

silence. One little effort was made by the King to maintain some shreds of his former state,—the state that had belonged to his forebears, but had vanished long ere his own day dawned. In ancient times the majesty of the Sultan did not permit him to address mere strangers directly. His golden words filtered to common ears through the medium of interpreters. Once or twice, listlessly, the King turned to a squatting creature near my chair and bade him tell me this, that, or the other commonplace; but when I refused to await the slow interpretation and answered direct, using the rounded phrases dear to Malayan custom, he cast away even this poor pretence of aloofness from the rank and file of humanity, and entered into conversation with me forgetful of ancient forms.

Presently, the complimentary period of our interview having sobbed itself to death, the talk passed to business, but of that I need say nothing. It was not begun by me, for my visit had no ulterior motive lying behind it, and the matters discussed were of no importance. None the less the talk enabled me to see something of the utter mental destitution of the rulers of Brunei, of the feeble thoughts, the greed, the vacillation, the total lack of self-confidence which has wrought the ruin of the land. It was an ugly glimpse of things unsightly, and I pass it over as quickly as I may.

At last I rose to go, but at the request of the

King our party started on a sort of hurdle-race over balustrades and low walls, severed each from each by rickety bridges, until at last we found ourselves in a tiny room somewhere at the back of the palace. A candle of immense proportions was set at my side, an honour with which I could well have dispensed, for the room measured not more than eight feet square, and the only doors were blocked by packs of staring natives. After an interval the Sultan's eldest son lurched through the crowd, seized my hand, and seated himself almost in my pocket. One glance at that bullet head, that retreating forehead, those foolish goggle eyes, restless and leering, those mouth-ing blubber lips, was enough to brand the creature for the loathsome thing he was. This degenerate son of a once mighty breed, this poor grimacing idiot, babbling follies, was the fruit, over-ripe with decay, of the self-indulgence and the vile ill-doing of generation after generation of men who had recognised no law of God or man save that of unchained inclination. He stood before us, the awful moral pointed by Nature at those who dare to sin against her will; in him, the epitome of his race, the utter degradation of erstwhile imperial Brûnei was typified. He represented the dotting of the last *i*'s, the crossing of the last *t*'s in the death-scroll which was spread so broadly for our inspection.

Even at rest and at a distance this poor victim of

others' guilt had been a thing horrible and revolting; but here, close at hand, in the insufferable atmosphere of the room, seated almost on the chair I occupied, with his hideous face leering into mine, and his twitching hands and restless body instinct with a disgusting eagerness, he was a sight to make you catch your breath, to set you wrestling with a sensation of physical nausea, to inspire a violent desire to destroy a creature whose very existence seemed, for the moment, to make the whole earth filthy. And all this time the wretch was gibbering and grimacing, writhing and squirming, possessed by a perfect passion of eagerness. Over and over again he repeated breathlessly the same muddled formula, drumming on the table with his fingers to emphasise his meaning, screaming his request aloud so that his voice trailed off into shrill falsetto and broke discordantly. He had inherited, together with other things, his forebears' love of money, and for money he now alternately wailed and stormed. His eyes were alive with the lust of gold: he seemed possessed by a devil of avarice: he sweated and trembled, stammered and raved in a frenzy of desire. In a breath he was arrogant and overbearing, abject and cringing, furious and piteous. Money, money, money.—it was the one passion that the thieving years had left intact in the heart of Brunei's rulers, and this miserable idiot, whose very soul was laid naked to our sight since he

lacked the wit to conceal what others hid more cunningly, was the spokesman of his fallen race. It was love of money that had driven the plundered Chinese from their thriving spice-gardens; it was the love of money that had tempted successive Kings to part with their land inch by inch, till all save a few square miles lay in the grip of strangers; it was the love of money that had reduced this empire to a mere mass of charred cinders; and the love of money now voiced itself in the strident screams of this poor wreck of Brûnei's manhood.

From behind a curtain in the dim background I caught the glint of women's eyes surmounting a suggestion of bright silks and gaudy jewelry, the eyes of Malay women, the most venal of their sex. That was the one touch needed to make plain the origin of Brûnei's fall. The Daughters of the Horse-Leech, crying "Give!" had hounded their men-folk to the quest of gold, gold at any price, so be it that the whims and extravagances of the moment's favourite might be gratified. That suspicion of bright eyes and dainty draperies supplied the one needed commentary to the text which we had studied with such a strange blending of pity and contempt.

More coffee was brought, more gigantic cigarettes, more candles, and the gibbering of the idiot never ceased. As soon as possible we tore ourselves away from the indecent spectacle, scrambled back into the

hall, where the King and his nobles still sat in state, and made our adieux. We regained the yacht after grounding on many evil-smelling mud-banks, and dropped down the river for a little distance in search of cleaner air. Hosts of tiny dug-outs pursued us, loaded with brass-ware carefully pickled in brine to give it an appearance of age, with hideous hairy weapons from the interior, with gaudy cloths ostensibly of native manufacture and of obvious Chinese origin. The people of Brûnei have lost their ancient arts together with their old-time greatness.

The ebb held us prisoners, and we could not quit the river till the dawn was yellow in the east. I took no part in the haggling for worthless gear, but lay on deck far into the night and gazed at the mean clusters of hovels squatting on the river's bosom half a mile up-stream. A couple of small fishing-smacks dawdled past, the paddles splashing rhythmically, the steersman raising a thin song, and the rowers taking up the refrain listlessly. These boats represented the last remnant of the vast fleets which in olden days were wont to put out fearlessly for a three years' cruise to terrorise the China Sea. The moaning of the boat-song, with its plaintive refrain pitched in a heart-broken minor key, sounded in my ears like a dirge chanted in memory of the dead past. Over the town the lights flickered out one by one, and night shut down upon the squalor and the misery. As the moon

rose and cast shimmering lights upon the waters of the river, a low bank of mist, white as snow and soft as floss, hovered above the town. As I watched, it crept downward, gently, tenderly, covering all things, till nothing save the whitened waters running towards me from beneath its fallen hem was visible. Brûnei, draped in those soft folds, had vanished utterly. It seemed as though the kind hand of Nature had drawn the death-cloth over the face of that poor corpse of empire.

THE RECORD OF SOMDET PHRA, SOMETIME KING OF SIAM

A CHAPTER OF ORIENTAL HISTORY

I

“It might be months, or years, or days,
I kept no count—I took no note,
I had no hope my eyes to raise,
And clear them of their dreary mote.”

BYRON.

THE squalid native town seemed to pant under the glare of the midday sun. The dry thatch roofs bristled and stiffened as the heat baked them; the dust of the dirty byways was a fine white powder whose surface shimmered blindingly; numberless crows, the only recognised scavengers of the place, sat on the trees with beaks wide open, panting and cawing feebly. An indescribable stench, peculiar to tropical Asia in those parts where human beings crowd the earth, and defy all principles of sanitation, pervaded the heavy air. No breath of wind moved among the trees which rose here and there around the clustering huts; the branches hung limply with every leaf motionless. In

the immediate foreground rude wooden huts lolled tipsily against one another, like a crowd of toppers overcome by sleep, and the white lanes ran in and out among them, strewn with trash and garbage, resembling the dried-up beds of rivulets. To the right, above the huddle of roofs and the pendant fronds of palms, the painted dome of a temple was outlined against a white-hot sky. Further to the left, the summit of a phallic obelisk of polished granite thrust an ignoble finger upward at the cruel sun. A vast stillness lay above the place like a visible mist,—the stillness that is born of heat, indolence, exhaustion of man, beast, and Nature; a stillness which was one with the heavy air, the dancing heat-haze, the intolerable oppression, and the stench of the merciless noontide.

Nothing moved, save a few lean dogs nosing and hunting in the garbage, the crows which now and again fluttered lazily from perch to perch, and two quaint human figures passing slowly from door to door, pausing a while at each. Their closely shaven heads were bared to the lashing of the sun-rays; their garments, which consisted of three lengths of coarse cloth, were of a dull orange colour, the hue originally chosen because it was more despised than all others, the distinctive badge of lepers and outcasts, now the most honoured in all the East as the uniform of the highest sanctity. Two of these lengths were

wrapped round the waist and about the thighs and legs, the third, after further swathing the lower limbs, was drawn up over the body and flung across the left shoulder, leaving the right arm, breast, and shoulder bare. The elder man had a fine strong face, lined by thought and study, worn thin and saintly by long years passed in the most ascetic of all communities. His figure was tall and imposing, and he stalked through the dirty alleys with the stride of one utterly free from self-consciousness, and with the dignity which that freedom alone can give. The youth who followed at his heels carried a begging-bowl, a brown earthenware vessel without lid or handle, and at each doorway, when a face rose slowly out of the gloom of the interior, he thrust this forward in silence. So often as a kind hand cast a few mouthfuls of cooked rice, yellow curry, or some other nameless mess into the bowl, the elder monk raised his voice in prayer, calling down a blessing on the charitable household ; but when no dole was offered the twain passed on in silence, and no request for alms was ever made save by the dumb mouth of the begging-bowl which gaped for a moment in each doorway that it passed. The rule of the Buddhist monks forbids any other stimulant to the charity of the public, just as it forces its votaries to visit every dwelling that lies in their way, so that rich and poor alike may reap an equal blessing no

matter what the value of their gifts. For an hour or more the two monks traversed the lanes of the squalid native quarter, the younger extending his bowl in mute supplication, the elder mumbling his blessings, or moving slowly forward in silence. Then, a sufficient dole having been collected, the twain took their way out of the town, and by narrow footpaths across grazing-grounds, to the grim monastery which lay five furlongs away to the East. It was a rambling pile of hewn stone, divided into cells, in each of which an ascetic lived his solitary life, with the great community-hall in the centre where periodically all met for worship and the public confession of sins.

Arrived at the monastery the young monk placed the begging-bowl within the doorway of his teacher's cell, and stole off to his own niche in that human pigeon-cote. It was long past midday, for the begging had lasted late, and the rule of the Order forbade the enjoyment of food between the hours of noon and dawn. Save for a few handfuls of trash, cold and clammy, which had been saved from the collections of the previous morning, neither the older man nor his disciple had tasted nourishment that day. Chun, the old monk, drank a draught of carefully strained water, wiped the sweat from his brow, and sat down upon the stone floor to meditate. He passed many hours of his day in this occupation, and when his body was spent with fatigue and want of food, his mind would

sometimes spring free from its prison of flesh and blood, and go soaring up and up until it knocked at the very gates of the Infinite. But beyond the gate he might not penetrate; his humanity barred him, as it has barred all save a very few since the beginning of the world. Chun was a man of sixty; he had lived in the monastery, first as a disciple, afterwards as a teacher, for half a century; he had never spared his body, and the most ascetic rule of the Order had ever been observed by him lovingly and faithfully. Study and deep thought had driven their furrows across and across his lean face, his eyes glared from cavernous sockets, his frame was worn to a skeleton, to look at him one might imagine that the veil of the flesh had been freed from its natural opaqueness, and had now well-nigh attained to transparency. Yet in his heart Chun was aware that the demon of desire was still quick within him, that its clutch clogged his feet, fettering him to the earth, when he would fain have soared heavenward.

The Buddhist rule does not provide for prayer in the Christian sense, its place being taken by the Five Meditations: the *Maitrī-bhāvanā*, or meditation on Love; the *Karunā-bhāvanā*, or meditation on Pity; the *Muditā-bhāvanā*, or meditation on Gladness; the *Asubha-bhāvanā*, or meditation on Purity; and the *Upekshā-bhāvanā*, or meditation on Serenity. As these were planned by Gautama, they are full of the

highest beauty, the most magnificent self-suppression, the most generous humanity; but in the frailty of his nature, the monk Chun too often found them merely tempting pegs on which to hang his own mundane thoughts and desires. When the meditation on Love should have led him to dwell upon the happiness which would have been his were he but free from all sorrow, evil desires, anger and unkindness, and then, with a heart overflowing with charity, to wish that such might be the lot of all men, and to long for the welfare of his foes, forgetting their sins, and meditating only on their good actions, Chun would suddenly discover that his hands were clenched, his teeth locked, his face flushed and distorted, for he had suffered and was suffering a lifelong injustice, the memory of which would not die, though he strove against it manfully. When he meditated on Pity, which should have been purely altruistic, excited by the misery of mankind, it was pity for himself, pity for Chun the monk, who should have been a ruler of men, that chiefly moved him. The meditation on Gladness, the happiness of others, that should have been coupled with an ardent desire for the well-being of all mankind, was apt to degenerate into a study in envy, in which Chun thought with impotent agony of all that his fate should have held for him, and the contrast with the life he lived—had lived for half a century—smote him with a blow that left him

trembling. Even the meditation on Purity, which bids a man dwell upon the corruption of all earthly things, the nothingness of human pleasure, the trivial nature of all human desires, ambitions, hopes; that should lead a man to ponder upon the speed with which all happiness that is of this world passes away into utter nothingness; that bids him conjure up a vision of joy only to watch it crumble to dust and ashes; even this meditation was fraught with temptation to Chun the monk. Old memories would awake unbidden, old scenes of splendour and luxury would float across his mind's eye, the joy, the ease, the power—most of all the power—that should have been his by right of inheritance, rose up in visions that tortured him with vain longings. He could not complete the meditation. He could not watch these dazzling pictures of the might-have-been fading into ugliness; he could not convince himself that they were things of little worth; transient let them be, but the man who had tasted of them to satiety would have lived—lived the full-blooded life that it was in this man's very bones to long for, to desire. Then when the fifth meditation should have led him to ponder upon all things in this world which hold good or evil—glory and shame, power and tyranny, love and hate, wealth and poverty, beauty and youth, decrepitude and disease—and viewing them from the height of a sublime serenity, to hold all in equal indifference, as a man

on a mountain-top takes no note of the tiny undulations of the plain beneath, Chun too often found that his mind rebelliously refused to accept the teachings of his Master. For fifty years he had lived in poverty, hunger, asceticism, purity, an unconsidered atom, obscure and impotent. For fifty years he had known that other things were his by right. Was it possible for him to despise the power, the fame, the luxury to which he had been born, which he had tasted for a little space during the first ten years of his life, years of which the memory still clung to him irresistibly? Could he regard this picture and that as one and the same in value? With his harsh experience behind him, his attempts to obey the precepts of Gautama were futile, hopeless. For this orange-clad monk, who begged his bread from door to door, was a King's son, his mother a King's daughter, and he himself the rightful ruler of the Siamese Empire!

Yet in spite of his temptations to divert the Five Meditations into a personal channel, and though on some days the impulse was so strong that he was powerless to curb it, Chun the monk, who should have been Chun the King, fought against the evil in his nature with the strength which came to him from a long line of rulers. The fifty years filled with asceticism and self-denial, during which his mind had stored wisdom, had left Chun a monk at heart. The

sin of evil desire was a phantom that haunted him, and in his efforts to subdue himself—surely the hardest task that man can set to man—he treated his body as his enemy, since he believed all his longings and discontent to arise from its pride, acquitting his spirit, as holy men are wont to do, of all participation in the assaults which harassed him. The Sons of the Sâkya, as the members of the Order to which he belonged are named, are subject to no punishment if they fall away, save only that entailed by the “doffing of the robe,” the casting aside of the yellow garments that transform a monk into a layman. For fifty years Chun had been free to leave the Order if so he willed, to plunge into the intrigues of the most intriguing of all Oriental Courts, to found a Legitimist Party, and to test his fortune by trying to dispossess his half-brother—the man born to his father by a concubine—of the throne which he held by force and not by right.

When he was a child Chun had been placed in a monastery in order to save him from the imminent danger of assassination, to which he was exposed by reason of his claims to succeed his father, and while he had served as one of the *Sâmanera*, or novices, carrying the begging-bowl of his teacher, sweeping out the holy places, and tending the sanctuary lamps, those who cared for him would have restrained him had he attempted to leave the shelter of the only

place in which he could find safety. But later, when he had become a member of the *Sramana*, the fully professed monks, nobody would have dreamed of deterring him had he resolved to "doff the robe." But here his pride and the might of the monkish tradition held him in leash. Self-conquest and universal charity are the very fibres from which the Buddhist teaching is knit into the splendid web which has held so many human souls. If Chun could not always attain to the one or the other, if for him universal charity was more than his frailty could compass, and if he often had publicly to confess that his heart was rebellious, and that thoughts of self crowded the hours which should have been devoted to abstract meditation, at least he could conquer himself sufficiently to avoid the shame of open shame which belongs to the weak soul, that falls away, and returns incontinently to the sordid world, after he has been vouchsafed a glimpse of the ethereal and the infinite. The very strength of his character, the very pride against which he fought so stubbornly, made such a confession of weakness and defeat an impossibility to Chun the monk. In common with the other members of his Order, he owed no obedience to any of his brethren, but he practised the extremes of asceticism, kept the law rigidly, in spite of his rebellious thoughts, confessed his short-comings resolutely, with jaw grimly set, and proud eyes downcast, accepted his

penance with humility, and dreaded nothing save the edict that might be issued bidding him to return to the world, as one who lacked the self-control which made its rejection a possibility.

As he sat to-day on the bare floor of his cell, his mind was busy with the things of this life. Faint whispers of stray news concerning the events of the kingdom filtered through the granite walls from time to time, their very vagueness making them tempting playthings for Chun's imagination. His identity had been so buried, and for so long a time, that only one or two of the more aged monks were aware of the rank that had belonged to their brother, and the people on whom he pronounced his blessings in return for a handful of cooked food, knew him only as Chun the monk. Thus, as he passed among them, he overheard now and again a frank comment made by some village politician on the rulers of the land and their methods. Tyranny, oppression, cruelty, the triumph of might, as represented by the King and his nobles, over right,—the patient peasantry; a tale of a woman reived from her husband or her lover; a record of unspeakable suffering hinted at in a few dull words by a crippled wretch whose fate had lodged him overlong in one of the villainous gaol-cages, that were then the only prisons; the wanton destruction of property by the King's tax-gatherers; the extortion of the underlings who stood between the people and the nobles,

and who themselves were plundered in their turn by those in authority over them; misrule, woe, lusts sated at the expense of the poor and thrifty, desolation, and tears, ever a plentiful flood of bitter tears,—it was always the same story of helpless misery, that set the monk's heart aching for the people. Here surely was material enough to fill his meditations on the worthlessness of human life, the nothingness of mundane things, with apt illustrations drawn from a dreary experience; but in Chun these echoes from the world beyond his cell awoke other thoughts. "Had *I* been King!" The proud words would rise involuntarily. Moved by some tale of distress the pure, strong face would work, the jaw set, the eyes flash. The thin scholarly hands would open wide and grasp at nothing, till the finger-nails ate into the palms. "Were the kingdom within *my* grip the law should be thus, and thus!" He felt the latent power surging up within him; he had the confidence in himself which is part of the inheritance of a born ruler of men; his studies of the beautiful literature of his faith, his meditations, his long struggles to attain to a perfection of universal charity, had endowed him with a vast sympathy for his fellows, an overflowing, generous humanity. The knowledge that there lay within him the will and the strength which might right so many wrongs, cure so many ills, dry so many tears, if only the golden opportunity were his, tore at

the monk's vitals, and made the monotony and the forced inaction of his life a burden well-nigh too heavy for human soul to bear. Then with a mighty effort he would control his erring mind, would crush it back into the conventional channel of abstract thought laid down in the precepts of the Master, and would make a mental note that the sin of evil desire had been sinned, and must be confessed at the next conclave after the rule of the Order had been read aloud to the assembled monks.

He was a Prometheus of a later day, chained to a rock, with eagles tearing at his heart; yet, even when his pain was most agonising, the bare idea of casting aside the yellow robe, and returning to the world, filled him with horror. To take such a step were to make a public confession of failure. A man capable of such weakness was certainly unfitted for the work of ruling others, was surely foredoomed to unsuccess ere ever the attempt were made. The lean, ascetic face would become set and rigid in its strength, with the force of a resolution which nothing could shake, as the recluse thrust the temptation behind him as a thing unclean. Therefore he endured, and wrestled, and beat his rebellious self into the dust, daily, hourly, and now for fifty long years he had maintained the fierce struggle, and had conquered, though he knew it not.

The monks were gathered in conclave, the oldest member standing a little apart from his fellows, and

mouthed out the rule of the Order in the sonorous sacred tongue. It was a ceremony which had taken place twice monthly upon the appointed days, as surely as the moon waxed and waned above the Buddhist world, for thousands of years. The Rule which governs every monastery inhabited by the professors of the purer Buddhism is in itself a wonderful creation. It lays but little stress upon outward observances, it proposes few articles of faith, it commands no obedience as between man and man, it defines no dogmas, it asks for no profession of belief in traditions concerning Gautama's miraculous actions, it might with equal propriety be subscribed to by every pure, strong, large-hearted soul of all races and of any creed. It seems to soar triumphant above all human things; it seeks to lead men's souls upward with it to a height so great that all the objects of desire offered by life on earth may be seen in their utter worthlessness, so that lust for them may die. But while it inculcates this contempt for earthly happiness and all that thereto pertains, while it teaches the purer soul that such things are unavailing for the satisfaction of his spiritual hunger, it bids him recognise that the majority of mankind prize joy and gladness, and find in worldly ease a certain surcease from sorrow. Therefore, the ascetic is taught, while mortifying and denying himself, to do all in his power to procure the happiness of others. More than this,

the Rule, which sets before its votaries the hard task of complete self-conquest, bidding each monk have no care for his own body, his own ease, his own comfort, commands him at the same time to extend his generous sympathy and his vast charity to the lowest creature that moves upon the earth. Purity of body, purity of mind, love of all things great and small, hatred of self alone, a magnificent aloofness which shall yet be joined to a complete sympathy with the needs of other,—such are the broad teachings of the Buddhist mendicant orders, and if it were given to all men to live up to such precepts surely sin and strife would depart from out the world.

When the old religious had finished the recital, and had laid the sacred scroll aside, first one monk and then another stepped forward to accuse himself publicly of sin. One confessed that he had been guilty of distractions while at meditation; another that he had allowed unkind thoughts to war against the virtue of universal charity; a third that he had inadvertently omitted to strain his drinking-water,—and this was a serious breach of the Rule; another that he had been guilty of fastidiousness which had led him to leave some peculiarly unappetising fragment of food uneaten in his begging-bowl; many spoke of lusts which rose rebelliously, and were conquered with difficulty, of half a hundred shortcomings, real or fanciful, the tale of each standing as

a record of a struggle waged in the solitude of a human soul between the ascetic and the nature born in him.

Last of all Chun moved forward apart from the crowd of yellow-clad monks. He stood there silent for a moment, an erect figure bearing the burden of his sixty years lightly, with his fine, clean-cut face calm but sorrowful. He looked what he was, a king of men, and even his attitude of humility could not rob him of the natural dignity that was his by right of inheritance. He raised his eyes and swept the listening crowd of ascetics with a bold, keen gaze. Then he spoke—

“My brothers,” he began, “my sin hath been grievous. I have sinned the sin of evil desire, not once but many times. I have hankered after, I have craved for many things which belong not to this life of holy study and devotion. The sin of worldly ambition hath been mine, whose aspirations should all be to the Infinite. I have sinned against charity, nourishing in my heart evil thoughts of others, withholding from men, mine enemies, the desire for their happiness which the Rule bids me extend to them above all others. Hatred hath not been to me a stranger; envy also hath visited me. My lusts after things temporal have raged within and torn me! Yet, my brothers, I have fought, I have wrestled, I have flogged the rebel of desire, I have longed to be free from the shackles of sin, and though too often

self hath been the victor, my desire to conquer that with which I have striven ceaselessly for fifty years is still strong within me. Say, my brothers, have I so transgressed our holy Rule that I am unworthy to number myself among the Sons of the Sākya? Say, must I doff the robe?"

He ended with a sob, a hard, dry sob that shook his whole frame. He threw his arms heavenward in a passionate gesture, eloquent of despair, such as men use when in the extremities of bodily suffering. Then he folded his arms, bowed his head, fixed his eyes upon the ground, and stood silently to hear his sentence.

The aged monk who had read the sacred scroll was the first to speak, not with authority, or as one having power to command, but simply as one who voices his own opinion, for among the sons of the Sākya no one has the right to claim obedience from his fellows. This old monk knew the secret of Chun's identity, and when the latter spoke of the trouble which beset him, the causes of those straying thoughts, and of those erring desires that would not die, were manifest to the elder man. Was it hard to understand that one who ought by right to have been the king of a great empire, should find it more difficult than his humbler fellows to wrench himself free from the bonds of worldly things, high hopes and vain desires?

"My brother," said the old monk very tenderly, "fear not. The Rule bids us war with self, and even

by thine own showing thou hast obeyed the Rule. The mightier the enemy, the more glorious is the victory. If self were dead within us, the battle would cease, and the prize of conquest would be ours. We should have attained perfection, and we should soar above the earth even as did our father the Buddha. Believe me, brother, the path thou treadest in such sorrow and such pain is the path which leadeth to perfection, if not in this life, perhaps in some higher life on earth. Here we grope as in the darkness of the heart of the night. Enemies beset us, and it is not given to us to overcome them as we would. But if we strive against them, half the victory is with us, A beleaguered city suffers no defeat until the hour cometh in which it surrendereth its keys to the conqueror. The doffing of the robe is demanded only of those who find the struggle too hard to maintain, who are bidden to return to the world because they lack the strength to prolong the strife between the higher self and evil desire. Thou hast not any part with the weakness of such as these; wherefore, O my brother, fight on and fear not!"

The assembled monks murmured their assent, and Chun, bowing down his head, accepted his penance submissively. For a week he was to sweep out the holy places, and to tend the earth about the sacred Bo trees, so that he, whose mighty heart had lusted for dominion over all his world, might curb his pride by

making clean from impurities a tiny patch of earth, and while so employed might learn to meditate upon the worthlessness of all things fashioned from the shifting dust.

The monks began to troop forth from the hall in a long yellow stream, but at the outer doorway their progress was suddenly arrested by a crowd of gaily-dressed Siamese laymen, who loudly demanded to be admitted. The monks turned about and filed back again to the upper end of the hall, and stood there in a silent group looking at the intruders.

The latter were attired in bright-coloured coats of silk or satin, buttoned to the throat with studs fashioned from gold and gems. Each man wore the national Siamese waist-cloth of coloured silk, folded cunningly about the thighs so as to present the appearance of a pair of baggy trousers drawn tight at the knee. White stockings encased their thin legs; they had slipped shoes of European manufacture at the entrance to the holy places. They were armed with priceless native daggers with sheaths and hafts chased and embossed with gold, they carried long swords imported from India or China, and one or two of them had European horse-pistols stuck in their girdles. In those days—it was in the year 1851—the firearms that found their way from the West to Siam were still of a primitive type, and every mangy hanger-on of the Court did not then possess a Mauser

magazine-rifle with which to frighten the peasants when he sallied forth to bully and hector in his master's name. That much desired consummation, that triumph of a higher civilisation, has been reserved for our own time to crown the achievements of the unclean, boastful, vulgar, glitter-loving party which calls itself "Young Siam." Men need not grudge it the title of which it is so fond, for all must confess that it has been amply earned. Never since Asia was the East has a political faction flourished whose aims were more puerile, whose performances were more childish, whose members more thoroughly understood the infantile art of "showing off," or which collectively was more skilled in behaving on all occasions after the manner of a vicious *enfant gâté*.

Apart from their gay clothing and their magnificent weapons, the new-comers were not charming to the eye. They belonged to the usual type of well-born Siamese, flat-faced, squint-eyed, slack-mouthed, badly built, with more cunning than intelligence in their looks and gestures. Their heads were bare, and shocks of stiff, coarse black hair stood erect upon their scalps like the bristles on a brush. Their figures were small, thin, and wasted; their eyes were heavy and tired; their movements were listless and languid. Long years of dissipation and self-indulgence, years spent in fanning fainting passions into weary activity, in flogging desires which drooped with exhaustion, in

pandering to passions inert with satiety, in seeking for new sources of pleasure with which to tickle deadened appetites, had left them feeble in body and apathetic in mind. No man having knowledge of the poisonous atmosphere of an Oriental palace and its *entourage* would have hesitated a moment in his recognition of the group before him as those who had breathed that sin-fouled air during all the days of their lives. Those sodden eyes, that opaque unhealthy skin, told their own tale. The contrast presented by the strong, fine faces of the monks, surmounting figures erect and lean, was merciless. Looking first at one group and then at the other, well might a man ask himself whether pleasure or asceticism were the harder taskmaster. The thought flashed through the mind of Chun the monk, and the horror of the doom which was entailed by the doffing of the robe struck him with a new force, had for him of a sudden a new and awful meaning.

A scent, delicate but penetrating, came from the mob of courtiers, a blending of all the unguents and perfumes with which the luxurious in Eastern lands smear themselves so lavishly. It was an odour which was strange to the nostrils of the ascetics, but in Chun it awakened memories of the past, as keen and vivid as those half-forgotten pictures only can be, which are conjured up by an appeal made by chance to our sense of smell. In a moment he was a child once

more—a little pampered thing to do whose bidding grown men ran hot-foot—lapped in the luxury of the women's apartments, fondled and caressed by dainty brown hands, surrounded by soft pillows, gay hangings, glossy silks and satins, all of which exhaled that delicate faint odour. For an instant he shut his eyes and let the vision rise unchecked in all its wooing sweetness; then he set his lips firmly and crushed down the desire for mundane things which, in spite of his recent repentance, rose up anew to torture him. He was aroused from the engrossing interest of his mental struggle in which every faculty was centred, by the sound of his own name.

"Is the monk whom ye call Chun still living in this monastery?" asked the leader of the band of courtiers.

The aged monk, acting as spokesman for his fellows, answered in a low tone—

"He is here, brother."

"Which among ye is he of whom I speak?" asked the noble.

Chun stepped forward. "I am he," he said proudly, and swept the group with that commanding glance that fifty years of humility had failed to dim.

In an instant the group of courtiers sank to the floor, their heels under them, the upper portions of their bodies extended along the ground, their arms outstretched in front of them with the hands palm downward, their faces bent to the earth.

“*Rūtthasakdanāphab!*” “*Phra!*” “Majesty!”
“Lord!” they cried in chorus.

Chun's lips contracted, hard puckers forming about the corners of his mouth, and two deep, perpendicular lines furrowing his forehead. He drew in his breath sharply, as though he suffered pain; and indeed in that first moment, while the shock of surprise was upon him, he knew not whether the emotion that rent him was most compact of sorrow or of gladness. His dream, so often dreamed during the half century of his confinement in the monastery, had come true at last! The power, the strength to rule men, all the latent abilities which fit their possessors for high station, all the attributes of whose existence he had so long been acutely conscious, were now to have full scope! No longer, gazing in impotent pity upon the sufferings of the people, should he send forth that bitter cry, “If *I* were King!’ Now the hour of trial had come; now he would be put to the proof; now at last would it be made manifest whether or no the recluse, who had eaten his heart out in longing to right the wrong and dry sorrowful eyes, while the power to act lay with others, would, when the opportunity had been vouchsafed to him, govern his kingdom with greater wisdom, kindness, sympathy than had the men who had gone before him. But through all these hurrying thoughts one other, mightier than they, predominated, filling his soul

with a rushing tide of sadness, and when at length he spoke it was this thought which shaped his words. The monks, finding that the man who had so long been their brother had now in an instant been transformed into their King, sank to the floor in the attitude of abject homage which is adopted in the Siamese court by those in the royal presence. Chun stepped to the aged monk, and raised him gently.

“Arise, brother,” he said, “and ye my brethren, arise. Alas! alas! Behold I am proved to be unworthy of your company. It is ordained that I must doff the robe! The sordid world hath claimed him who could not put its desires from his heart after fifty years of strife!”

A great grief vibrated through the tones of his voice. He bowed his head upon his breast, and those who squatted at his feet saw that his eyes were bright with tears.

“Not so, my brother—Majesty,” said the old monk, stumbling over the new, strange title, “Not so. For fifty years thou hast laboured to attain perfection, mastery of self, love of all mankind. Now thou art called to high estate, that thy land and thy people may be blessed in their lord, that virtue bred in solitude and poverty may cast its light over the earth, as the sun shineth ripening the tender crops. Go forth, brother, go forth, not as one unworthy of the yellow robe, but as one who having won in solitude the battle

of the strong, hath yet great labours to perform for the good of his brethren—the men who toil and suffer in that chill outer world. Go forth as a victor, not as one who hath suffered defeat!” The old man ended with a sob, and the other monks gave vent to a murmur which echoed the sadness that weighed on Chun’s own spirit.

He turned to the crowd of courtiers who had come to announce his accession, and to them he instinctively spoke, employing the words which only a King may use when holding intercourse with his inferiors. They lay crouching on the floor around his feet, and they answered his questions submissively, interlarding their phrases with the complimentary exaggerations dear to Oriental lips.

The usurper, he learned, had died. His children had perished before him. There was no man left to dispute the right of the legitimate heir to the throne of his fathers. These nobles had come hot-foot from Bangkok to bring the tidings to their lord, and they were eager to carry him back with them as speedily as possible.

“That may not be,” said Chun. “For seven days I must remain in this holy place, for as penance for the sin which I have sinned,—the sin of evil desire—I must tend the sacred Bo trees, and keep the earth around them clean from all impurities. When that task is accomplished, when the seven days have passed into night, I will put off the yellow robe, and enter

into my kingdom, but not before, so long as the penance is still to do ! ”

Wherefore, for seven days the astonished courtiers beheld their King begging his bread from door to door, spending long hours in fasting and meditation, and passing hither and thither among the sacred trees, sweeping the dusty earth, or performing the menial offices of the sanctuary.

“ What thinkest thou ? ” asked one courtier of another. “ Is this monk whom we have found a King or a slave ? A saint will find the palace a place of little ease. ” And the speaker laughed coarsely.

“ It will take a clever saint to cope with six hundred female sinners ! ” jeered another. “ What will the women make of him, think you ? ”

“ Universal love is a virtue preached by the monks, ” laughed the first speaker. “ The women will teach our saint to spell out the text of a new holy book. For a man ’tis a lesson easy enough to learn even if his years number three score. ”

“ Easy enough, when a pretty girl is the teacher. *Hayah !* Men be much the same, no matter the colour of their robes, or the hue of their hair ! The palace will unsaint him, fear not ! ”

“ Ye speak according to your kind, ” said the leader of the party. “ But it seems to me that our King is a Man. Did you note the flash of his eye, and the tone of his voice when he turned to us from sobbing over

those lousy monks? He spoke like a King, yea, and he looked the part. Mark his jaw, Luang Visudth. If I mistake not our King hath a will of his own for all his sainthood; his teeth are rammed home in their sockets, despite his sixty years; study hath not dimmed his eye, nor fasting weakened his frame. I tell you, for all your cheap jeers, that he is a man who will rule men as it is fitting that men should be ruled. Listen to my words, Luang Visudth, and you, Phra Patipak Pachakom, and you, Phra Savasti Borirom, mend your manners and fetter your tongues when our saint, as ye name him, is at hand, for I warn you that he will prove ill to cross. I have not served at Court, where a man to live long must sing as the King chooseth, without learning to gauge men, and by the living Buddha, I tell you that this monk is a Man!"

And during those seven days Chun, the monk, who, whether King or saint, was very much a man, suffered many things. In the lives of each one of us there come days, one or more, on which we realise that a chapter of our history is about to close; when we stand shivering on the brink of the unknown morrow, exhilarated perhaps by the excitement of anticipation, happy, it may be, at the prospects which the inevitable change in our condition presents to our imaginations, and yet awed a little by the knowledge that we are powerless to arrest or delay the event. At such moments we see ourselves as we are—mere flies upon

the wheel of time. Our impotence terrifies us; the might of Fate grips us; we are at the mercy of unseen forces. And then it is that, as we review the past, a sadness akin to that which is born of a keen nostalgia, dominates us. The mists of memory arise softening our recollections of the days that are done, obscuring the pains and sufferings with which they were oftentimes laden, hanging like a golden halo about the joys which now bulk so big, and hallowing all that world in which we may live no longer.

And all these sensations were experienced by Chun the monk with a force incomparably stronger than is usual even when the anticipated change is most radical and sudden. It is given to very few to live one life for fifty years: to fewer still to live into that life with all the strength of a heart throbbing with latent power, of a mighty soul mastered by an iron will, and then suddenly, abruptly, to be called upon to abandon it for another form of existence as widely different from it as ever was world from world. The pang inseparable from so violent an uprooting of his being wrung Chun with an agony that rent him; his cell was now unspeakably dear to him; the calm, peaceful beauty of the past, as he saw it in retrospect, set him wondering at the insanity which had made him long for other things when that priceless gift was his; his love of every cold stone in the old monastery, of each one of the familiar faces of the monks, of each word of the

sacred scrolls which custom had enshrined in his memory, of the kind hands which had been wont to fill his begging-bowl, of the very kites that whistled overhead, of the crows that cawed upon the trees, even of all the still life that had surrounded him from childhood, surged up in his bosom and filled his eyes with tears. How could he ever tear himself away from things so dear, faces so kind, hearts that knew his every sorrow, every joy, and throbbed in sympathy for their brother the monk? It seemed to him that the very bitterness of death was his, that never again could pain or sorrow touch him since he had endured all the agony of which man's soul is capable.

And then came other thoughts: "When I am King the law shall be thus and thus!" All human joy is based on human suffering. The future lay before him, the last few years of a life spent in conflict with the rebels within his breast. The time that remained to him should be passed in labouring for the good of others. Out of his present agonies he saw arise the happiness of a nation! Now that the dream had come to pass there was no gladness in his heart; the passage from cloister to palace entailed a mightier act of self-sacrifice than had any of the privations to which he had submitted in the past; but in his soul he knew that, since the gratification of an ambition which had once tempted him now held nought but

sadness, the rank and power which he accepted so mirthlessly were safe in his keeping.

On the evening of the seventh day the monks assembled in their chapter-house, to witness the "doffing of the robe." Chun stood among them in silence for a while, then as of old he stepped forward and spoke in self-condemnation.

"My brothers," he said, "while peace was still my portion, I was too often troubled by unrestrained longings for things of the lower world. Now, when that which of old I desired hath come to pass through no act of mine, the rebel self within me ceaseth not to war against me, pitting inclination against duty. I lust no longer for power, rank, or wealth; instead my soul crieth out by day and by night for the calm, the peace, the happiness of the holy life ye live. When it was mine I knew not the joy that is found only in a cell; turning my eyes from good, I lusted after evil, sinning the sin of vain desire. Now, my brothers, behold my punishment!"

With head bowed upon his breast, and dry eyes hard with pain, the monk Chun cast aside the yellow garments that he had worn so long, and put on the gorgeous silks and satins which the courtiers had brought with them for his wearing. The contact of the dainty stuffs with his skin, which had been covered by nothing save the coarse, patched habit for fifty years, fretted him. The rustle of the silks, the delicate

odours which they exhaled, the unaccustomed presence of soft draperies, revolted him. They seemed to rob him of his sturdy manhood, to make him a thing frivolous and effeminate, to be typical of a new and meaner bondage. He turned to the monks once more, and his eyes were downcast with a new shame.

"Your blessing upon me, my brothers!" he said huskily; and when the chorus of holy words murmured by many voices had rumbled through the hall, he faced about abruptly, strode through the arched doorway, and so out into the night, the crowd of courtiers following at his heels.

Behind him lay the old grey monastery sleeping peacefully under the solemn moonlight,—an emblem of the calm, reposeful solitude, the deep-centred happiness of the life which he was leaving. Before him, many miles away down the great, slow-moving river—the Mainam, the Mother of Waters,—the towers and minarets of Bangkok thrust their tawdry, painted summits skyward. There lay his goal—the vast walled palace, with its bowers and its gardens, its flowers and its fountains, its six hundred female inhabitants, whose sole end in life it was to minister to the pleasures of the only man who ever entered those secret places—their lord and master, the King of Siam. Beyond the walls lay the lesser harems of the nobles, and the atmosphere was heavy with sordid lusts and ignoble intrigues, all presently to centre about the

person of the man who for fifty years had lived the most ascetic of all lives. Peace and virtue, altruism and self-control, lay behind him enshrined in the grey monastery; before him spread a world compact of sin and strife, gross selfishness, vile pleasures, and the indulgence of low passions—the world, the flesh, and the devil in all their crudest forms, alluring and shameless. Small wonder if Somdet Phra the King, who had been Chun the monk, rode into the night to enter into his kingdom with a heavy heart.

Yet, as he went, the soft night breezes which played about his face bore to him scents and sounds that conjured up other thoughts in his mind. The air was heavy with the sounds of insects, such as make musical the tropic night-time; the lowing of kine came to him across the grazing-grounds; the smell of wood-fires, over which poor folk cooked their evening meal, was borne to him from the villages as he passed, together with the whine of a restless child and the soft crooning of a sleepy mother; a stave of a love-song, the gay laugh of a maiden, the gentle murmur of peasant voices talking around their hearth to the women and little ones whom they loved. The blended sounds spoke to Chun of peace that had its home outside the walls of a monastery; of men and women who lived simple lives filled with toil and self-sacrifice borne for one another's sake; of the vast majority of the people of his kingdom who were untainted by

the vices of the Court. And then there came to him the memory of their sorrows and their sufferings, of the oppression which ground them in the dust, of the knowledge of their needs and their necessities that had come to him during the years that he had wandered through the villages begging his bread from door to door.

“Now that I am King my dreams shall come to pass! Now that I am King, the law shall be thus and thus!” he said to himself, and the proud words thrilled him. “Though I sit within a shady palace, the land shall be ruled for these, my brothers, who toil and sweat in the sun-glare. Good shall conquer evil; cruelty and oppression shall die; though I be quitting calm and peace, these things will I send forth to gladden the lives of the peasant folk my brethren; ay, though I pass through all the sorrow of the world to attain my end, rank, power, and wealth shall be held in trust for these impotent ones! Alas, alas, that so few days remain to me in which to work my will, in which to accomplish my appointed task!”

A sudden sense of age came upon him with overmastering force—an unaccustomed idea, for in the monastery he had been wont to take small note of the passage of time. In a moment he was tingling with eagerness to begin the labour which had been too long delayed. He was pricked forward by a restless consciousness of the inexorable cruelty of Time, the urgent necessity for haste. Instinctively he put his

horse into a gallop. But the thought of his mission thrilled him, inspired him with a new vigour, and he sat erect, carrying his head high, and the light of a mighty enthusiasm, albeit tempered somewhat by his store of hard-earned wisdom, played about his sad face, which was set with the firmness of a great resolve. And thus Somdet Phra the King rode forward into the night.

II

“I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May God within Himself make pure!”

TENNYSON.

TWO - AND - TWENTY years after the evening upon which Chun the monk doffed the robe and entered into his kingdom the death-gongs clanged and brayed, the drums sobbed heart-brokenly, and the keening of many women-folk shrilled through the palace at Bangkok, for within its walls the old King lay a-dying.

In the houses of the nobles, which lay around the royal precincts, excited men passed to and fro ceaselessly, bringing word of the King's failing breath, and already many who had not dared lift their heads while Somdet Phra ruled with so strong a hand, were busy hatching intrigues, and plotting snares for the son that was to come after him. For more than a score of

years the nobles had been forced to see their ancient customary privileges curtailed whenever these chanced to collide with the interests or the freedom of the peasants; they had watched justice replacing oppression—an ugly transformation in the eyes of hereditary oppressors,—right overcoming might, crime punished, no matter the height from which it had swooped upon its victim, the women and the property of the poor protected from the rapacity of lustful chiefs, and yet, so firm had been the grip of their king upon the land he ruled, that none had found the courage to oppose him, none had possessed the strength necessary to turn him from the path which he had elected to tread.

“I knew him for a saint,” said he who of old had borne the title of Luang Visudth, “when first I saw him sweeping the dust about the Bo trees, but I dreamed not that a holy beggar could have so heavy a hand. It hath been an evil life that we have led under his rule, and indeed I had not found the strength to bear it had it not been that I saw the years pressing sorely upon him, and the pyre licking its lips for a taste of his flesh.”

“True, brother,” said another noble, “and his son is nought but a stripling. There be promise in that.”

“Our friends within the palace will do the rest,” said a third. “His sainthood was over ripe when first he came amongst us, and though he got him more than a score of children, he never suffered the women-folk

to win a grip upon him. That hath been our trouble. It is in bright eyes and laughing lips that our power lieth, when so we can make the dainty ones dance the marionette who wears the crown to a tune of our setting."

"Give me the hot blood of a boy," cried Luang Visudth, exultingly, "not the cold gruel that has been worn thin by life in a cloister. A merry time lieth before us, brothers, and in faith we are worthy of it, for we have waited over long."

"Old Siam lieth sick unto death! Long may young Siam live and flourish!"

"Even now the boy is irked by his father's piety, and small blame to him, say I!"

"The peasants have waxed arrogant these many years, but when the boy is our led-leader that will easily be set right!"

"No more saints for us, brothers," cried Luang Visudth aloud. "It will be a happy day for sinners when the holy man hath passed to rest, and we have much reckoning to do. There is a long account for pleasure withheld, and I have a mind to see the balance drawn evenly ere my hour cometh. Let us go out and inquire how it fares with the old man. Though the pyre cost two million *tikals* I would pay for it willingly if I knew that his lean carcase was ready to teach virtue to the flames!"

The pack of aggrieved nobles rose up and swaggered out to the palace gateway, there to ask eager

questions of the guard as to how it fared with their dying King.

In a room in the guard-house three old chiefs sat talking in low tones. The eldest of them was the man who had been entrusted with the message which had torn Chun the monk from his cloister two and twenty years before.

"In that hour I told them," he was saying, "that our King was a Man, and in truth he hath proved my judgment true. Has ever a King of all our Kings before him toiled as this one hath done to fulfil the oath of even justice which he took at the drinking of the holy waters? No man hath been deemed too mean to be granted an audience. 'They be brothers of mine,'—how often have we heard him say the word? And then the wrong has been righted, and he who wrought it hath sweated and writhed while the King's eye burned him, and the tongue of the King lashed him as though with scourges. O, my brothers, we who are old know that Siam will long seek vainly for a ruler such as he hath been."

"True," said one of the others sadly, "for when again shall men find the heart of a monk in the body of a King, and an iron hand guided by a soul which loveth all things?"

The third chief took up the tale of praise and lamentation. "The poor and needy will suffer many

things when their friend hath passed from amongst us. And the boy, his son? Already the younger chiefs aided by the palace-women have lighted the torch of lust within him. When there is no longer a King over him, who shall bind the young heart, who cool the fierce young blood? What boy hath the wit or the strength to restrain appetites which so many will be busy a-tickling, and while he spends himself on foolishness the old evils will return, and sorrow will fill the land as it did aforetime."

"Moreover we who are of the King's party, and, aiding him, have done much to awaken the spite of the nobles, shall fall upon evil days. We cannot ply the trade of panderers, and I foresee that none others shall thrive under the rule of the boy-monarch," said the first speaker, the man who had detected the force of the King under the yellow habit of the monk, and once again he proved to be a true prophet. The three old chiefs fell silent, and their hearts were dead within them, their eyes heavy with unshed tears for the loss of the master they loved, the destruction of high ideals, the blotting out of a work which it had taken twenty years of genius and selflessness to bring to its fair promise of fruition.

In the interior of a tumble-down hut on the outskirts of a village, half a dozen peasants were seated around an oblong betel-box, preparing succulent quids, or chewing slowly with the gravity of

ruminating kine. Their faces were tanned by the sun, and scarred by wind and weather; their eyes were heavy and dull; their backs were bowed by long stooping over plough and harrow. They seemed to have acquired something of the solidity of the earth by which they lived, more than a little of the calm patience of the oxen which aided them in their labours. If these were the peasants of whose arrogance the discontented nobles spoke, their pride was hidden under a sufficiently thick veil of stolidity and apparent poverty. Yet these men also spoke of the dying King.

"Men say that his time draws very nigh," said one, and silence fell once more over the group, the silence born of minds that move slowly, taking much time to gather the force requisite for the clothing of thought in words.

"An evil hour for us, my brothers," said an old man presently. "Who now will listen to our tales of distress?"

"Since he ploughed the furrows at the annual feasts, the crops have borne richer fruit," said another, referring to the custom of the Kings of Siam who annually plough a field, while their women sow seeds behind them, which the peasants gather up for luck, and mix with the grain set aside for their own sowing. Another long pause followed.

"'Tis the seed of much mercy and kindness that our King hath sowed for us," said the old man who

had spoken before. "While he hath reigned our homes and all they hold have been ours to us. Of old times, as we well remember, men were wont to mar the beauty of their wives and daughters lest being over fair they should be reived from them by the nobles. Those days may return again when the strong arm that hath warded us from trouble is withdrawn."

"Ah, 'twill be a heavy time," murmured another peasant sadly, "and indeed since for a score of years we have enjoyed a great peace, the heavier will be our burden if sorrow return to us."

"Our sun sinketh even now," rejoined the older man, "the night of trouble is near at hand; but for a space his rays have been warm upon us. No man can rob us of the past, and, in that we have known happiness for a space, we be more blessed than those who came before us. If the sun sinketh and the darkness overwhelms us quite, let us remember that once he shone upon us brightening our lives!"

"'Tis an easy thing for thee, grandfather, to find comfort in such thoughts," growled a youngster who had his seat in the background where he had been carrying on a whispered conversation with a girl whose figure was hidden by the shadows. "'Tis easy enough for thee to find pleasure in memories of what hath been, for thy day is past, but what of us, whose day is yet to come? We peasant folk be impotent as fish within the fishing stakes, and only the King

can save us from the wicked will of those who have power over us. Now the King lieth sick unto death, and how should the boy, his son, hold such hell-hounds as the nobles in leash? *Ahi! Ahi! Ahi!* A very evil time is drawing near, and there is nought can stay it, and nothing can comfort or console us who are about to suffer!"

The young fellow threw his arms abroad in a passionate gesture of despair, and from out the darkness there came a sound of women sobbing bitterly.

Within the palace, women passed to and fro restlessly, for the wonted order of their lives was suddenly thrown into confusion by the hand of death which lay so heavily upon their lord and master. There was a flutter of excitement that could be felt in the very air of the place, a murmur of whispered speculation as to the future, a sensible tremor of expectation. The death of their King meant the only change which affected all the women collectively. The favour of the monarch might from time to time exalt one party in that intriguing palace; his disfavour might abase another leader, and those whose fortunes were identified with hers; but his death alone revolutionised the lives of all, and set the women wondering, and scheming to fashion the future after a manner to their own liking. For two-and-twenty years every soul in the palace had played her own game, had spread

her own dainty net, had used every wile at her command to entrap the heart of the King, or failing that to attract his notice for a passing moment. Now the King lay a-dying, and as a lover, actual or potential, he had ceased to interest the fickle palace-folk. Already all thoughts were turned in the direction of his heir, and each woman was forming her little foolish plans for the enslaving of the boy who so soon would be lord of all and master of their fates.

By a fountain in one of the gardens which lie within the interior of the palace enclosure, a knot of girls was gathered whispering and giggling. They all wore their hair cut short after the manner of the Siamese, and were dressed in jackets and waist-cloths, the latter swathed about their limbs trouser-wise, a certain brilliancy of colouring, daintiness of arrangement, delicacy of texture, and profusion of ornament alone distinguishing their costumes from those worn by the men of their own race. The soft evening light, which comes to bless the tropic lands for a little space before the short inglorious dusk, mellowed the bright colours of grass and flowers, painted palace buildings, paper garden-houses, and the gay raiment of the girls. The breeze that set their draperies a-fluttering was soft and balmy.

“The old tree falleth, for the sap is dry!” said one girl. “Give me fresh, ripe fruit, luscious and sun-warmed!”

The others tittered. "Thou makest very certain that the fruit will be thine to pluck," sneered one of them.

"Ay, I make certain," cried the girl who had first spoken, "and so mayest thou also, flat-face though thou art, for when a young King ruleth in the palace, only those whom the years have parched and withered need fear neglect. There will be a share for all, and it is for her who knoweth how to combine wit with beauty to plunder better than her fellows!"

"Art thou that one? Must we name thee Queen, thinkest thou?" returned the girl who had been described in a manner so little complimentary, and there was venom in her sneer.

"I care little what ye may call me, but I know what I know. I can read the tale of the straying eye as well as another."

The other girls eyed their self-confident companion with extreme disfavour. In the palace at Bangkok each woman is the rival, real or fancied, of her five hundred and ninety-nine fellows, and when any one among them claims to have been more favoured than the rest, she awakes the jealousy and the hatred of all the others.

"Arrogant one!" cried the eldest woman in the group. "Dost thou think that the young King, when he cometh to his own, will cast his eyes twice on such as thou art?"

"He will have too much wit to give his love to one who boasts of the victory ere ever the battle hath engaged!" cried another.

"Besides he will thirst after beauty," said the girl who had been called "flat-face," and still writhed under the ill-merited epithet.

"That maketh *thy* chance a slender one, squinter," said the first speaker, with a maddening laugh.

The other girl gathered herself together and made a spring at her enemy, her arms whirling and her knuckles crooked so as to give her nails full play. She was met by a buffet in the face, and then the two closed and fought with screams and shrill outcry, biting and tearing, as is the manner of Oriental women. Two old hags, who were guardians of the younger inmates, rushed out of a neighbouring building and separated the combatants.

Although the life had not yet left the body of their King, the palace women were already fighting, ghoul-like, over his corpse, for the possession of his successor's fickle affections.

In an inner room of the palace, bare save for palm-matting on the floor, and the thin mattress with its wooden pillow, Somdet Phra, the great King, lay with many watchers seated about his head. His figure, always thin, was now reduced to the last stage of emaciation, so that every bone in his body was visible

under the pale skin. His cheeks were hollow; his eyes looked out of deep caverns; his forehead, covered with great bosses of bone, seemed disproportionately huge and prominent; his shrunk limbs had fallen together at the joints, and were pitifully reduced in length, looking hardly larger than those of a boy of thirteen. The worn-out frame lay very still, the breath came feebly, its rhythm broken occasionally by a succession of quick pants, the eyes, albeit they retained something of their old fire, looked forth unseeingly, and the claw-like fingers scrabbled now and again over the silk covering of the flock sleeping-mat. To those who sat around, it seemed as though the king were sunken in a deep unconsciousness, but in reality his mind was working with unimpaired clearness, although it leaped from one memory to another with the restlessness which is born of physical weakness.

His thin legs twitched, and his hands gripped convulsively. In retrospect he was riding forth from the seclusion of the monastery, forth into the night, his heart weighed down by a heavy sadness, yet strengthened and upheld by the enthusiasm of his high resolves. The feverish necessity for haste pricked him as of old: Time, Old Age, and Death pursued him relentlessly—the Three Furies that sought to bring to ruin the work upon which his heart was set.

Then, as his mind flew forward, he saw himself during the first days of his kingdom. Again the

acute contrast between the royal state and the humble life of the monk, between the luxury of the palace and the austerity of the cell, between the Court banquets and the fruits of the begging-bowl, between the hosts of cringing flatterers and the reposeful silence of his solitude, between the fetterless polygamy that horrified him after fifty years of asceticism and celibacy, struck him afresh with all the irksome disgust which at first it had held for him. The King must use the ancient state of his forebears lest the dull minds of the people should fail to recognise their master in one who lived too simply; the King must maintain touch with the members of his Court by daily intercourse, lest the reins of government should slip through his fingers, wherefore he must attend banquets and functions though his soul pined for solitude; the King must breed sons to rule the land he held in trust for those who were to come after him, wherefore he must conform with old usage and accept the harem that came to him with his sceptre. Somdet Phra had realised this even in the beginning, and though he found his duties often hard to perform, the things that represented pleasure to others a secret defilement to himself, he lifted the whole burden of his royalty on to his broad shoulders, and bore it manfully as portion and parcel of the lot which destiny had assigned to him.

A weaker man had surely been ruined body and soul by the sudden change in his life, had become

lapped in the unaccustomed luxury until the needs of his people waxed dim before his drugged eyes, their cry for help too faint and distant to have any meaning for his pleasure-steeped senses; but as he now reviewed the past, Somdet Phra saw clearly that through their very lack of attraction, the temptations which had ruined so many of his ancestors had been merely an added stimulant to him. He had turned from them with a positive relief, as from dreary duties which he could only perform ungladly, and in all his day two hours alone stood out prominently in his memory as having held for him a joy which never failed him.

The first was the time which he daily devoted to meditation. Now, no longer did his heart stray off, allured by the cravings of a vain desire. The meditation on Love set him tingling to make more happy the lot of his people; the meditations on Pity and on Gladness nerved him anew for fresh efforts to reform things evil, and to right the wrongs of his subjects; and when he pondered on Purity and on Serenity, he had now no longer any difficulty in subscribing to the teaching that all mundane pleasures and joys are vanity, and nought but dust and ashes in the mouth. Only now and again a passionate craving for his cell in the old grey monastery would seize upon him, and for a while he would be sick and faint with the intensity of his longing; but he thrust the thought aside, and fought with it as formerly he

had been wont to battle with his ambitions and his lust for power and rank. The man who had been fifty years a mendicant, and twenty years a king, saw now with clear eyes in which calling the greater peace and happiness lay. For him illusions had ceased to exist, and his love of all living things, which had been bred in the cloister, alone upheld him now that he endured sadly in a royal palace.

The other blessed hour of his day had been that during which he sat in his hall of state and listened patiently to the sorrows and the complaints of his people. Here he administered justice, here he redressed wrongs, here he dispensed charity to the needy, and none were so mean or poor that their troubles were deemed unworthy of the attention of the king. Somdet Phra had often overheard his courtiers marvelling at his kindness, praising him for his condescension in stooping to hearken to the tales of a despised peasantry; but to him this self-appointed task had been the sweetest thing that his rank had brought to him, the highest privilege of his kingdom. At first the people had come to him fearfully, dreading the wrath of his nobles; but later they had gained confidence, and had boldly laid their troubles open to the view of one who never failed in justice or in mercy. The knowledge that any act of oppression committed by a noble would probably be brought to the notice of the King by those who suffered from

it, had done more than all else to restrain the excesses in which the princes and chiefs of the land had indulged from time immemorial, and thus the peace and the happiness, of which Chun the monk had dreamed so vaguely, had come upon the people over whom Somdet Phra ruled so wisely and so well.

As he thought of these things, lying stretched upon his death-mat, worn out by age and weariness, the King saw clearly the difficulties which had beset him. He saw himself in the likeness of a rock, against whose stubborn flanks wave after wave of intrigue and counter-intrigue, had shattered itself and foamed away in impotence. Intrigues among the nobles, cliques and parties striving each with each to secure an influence over him that should make him their creature to rule as they willed; intrigues which had their root in personal ambitions; intrigues among the peasant suitors, who sought to entrap his justice by half-lies and *ex parte* statements; intrigues without end among the bickering women of the palace—everywhere, on every side, intrigues past all counting, empty things and vain, each one in its turn defeated by his calm courage, the force of his resolution, his singleness of purpose, and the strength of his iron will. As now he pondered over the past, his victories set his heart a-glowing. The man who had spent half a century in the conquest of himself, had proved too much for the paltry folk

whose incentives to action were only selfishness and mean desires.

Also he had effected other things, the memory of which now recurred to him, warming his dying heart. He had thrown off the yoke of China, which had been borne by Siam for unnumbered years; and this he had done by virtue of a bold front, a dauntless resolution, and without the shedding of a drop of human blood. He had consolidated the position of his country among the nations of the East; he had entered into treaties with European Powers, and had encouraged their traders to the great advantage of his own subjects; he had thrown down the phallic monuments which of old had disgraced the land, and had done his best to purify it from the defilement of an unclean worship; he had endowed monasteries, and had aided learning and sanctity, for did not his own experience tell him what an accumulation of power and strength lay in the holy life? He left Siam a cleaner, more wholesome, happier, stronger kingdom than it had ever been aforetime; he had set up the idols of peace, and justice, and mercy to be worshipped in the midst of a down-trodden people, had inspired freedom with a new vitality. Such was his record, and he had been more than human had not his heart beaten with a quickened throb in pride of so noble a task accomplished at the cost of a self-sacrifice so bitter.

He moved restlessly, rolling his head upon the hard pillow, and a woman who sat close beside him, his principal wife, leaned over him tenderly. He had had other consorts during the earlier days of his kingship, but it was this woman, who had come to him ten years after his accession, who had first taught the full meaning of love to the man who had thirsted for it during many decades of lonely life. The mutual devotion and self-sacrifice which bind man to woman by the dearest of all bonds, making the loved one so far more precious than life itself, had been given and taken by these two souls whose union came so late. Did the girl, who was brought to comfort David when age had stricken down that mighty King, revere and love her dying lover for all that he had been in his splendid prime? The Holy Book has no word to tell us; but this other maiden who had wedded the King of seventy, laid at his feet a pure and tender love, and since he had not wasted his forces in early youth, and had not frittered away his heart on passing fancies, she inspired him with a passion that had made beautiful his failing years. She had borne children to her lord, and the

“Clambering limbs, and little hearts that err”

of these had been dearer to him than his other sons and daughters, since they were the fruit of the single human love which had visited him in all his many days of life. The joy of home with wife and child, the proud

throb of paternity, the tenderness for all the world which springs from witnessing the pangs of one woman who suffers for her husband and her son, all these highest of human emotions, so long withheld, had come at last to the ascetic, softening and completing his nature.

She always had understood him; and had sympathised with his aims and his plans; had known how to encourage, how to up-lift, how to mollify his righteous wrath, how to advocate mercy when justice wore too harsh a guise; she had been the other, tenderer half that joined to him, made whole the nature of Siam's greatest King. Now as she bent above him, her eyes wide with grief, the faltering whispers were distinct in her loving ears, though they were faint as the echo of a murmured word. It was ever hers to understand this man as no other human soul could do.

"Heart's Heart," he panted. "My time . . . is very near . . . the end of the long . . . long flight . . . hath come. Were it not that I am leaving . . . thee, . . . thee and the little ones, . . . a great peace . . . would be mine. Guard them well, . . . Dear One, when I am . . . gone. Keep them . . . pure, even as thou art pure."

He closed his eyes exhausted with the effort of speech, but she still bent above him, and presently he spoke again.

"The robe . . . Heart's Heart . . . the robe!"

"Wouldst thou don again the yellow garment which

thou wast wont to wear in the days before thou camest from the monastery to rule over us?"

He made an eager sign of assent, and when the mouldy robes had been brought, and her kind hands had draped them in the old fashion about his wasted frame, he spoke again.

"Ten years was I a child . . . fifty years was I a monk . . . for twenty years have I been King . . . for a decade have I been a . . . lover, thy lover, Sweetest One, . . . and now that death draws nigh, fain would I die . . . a monk!"

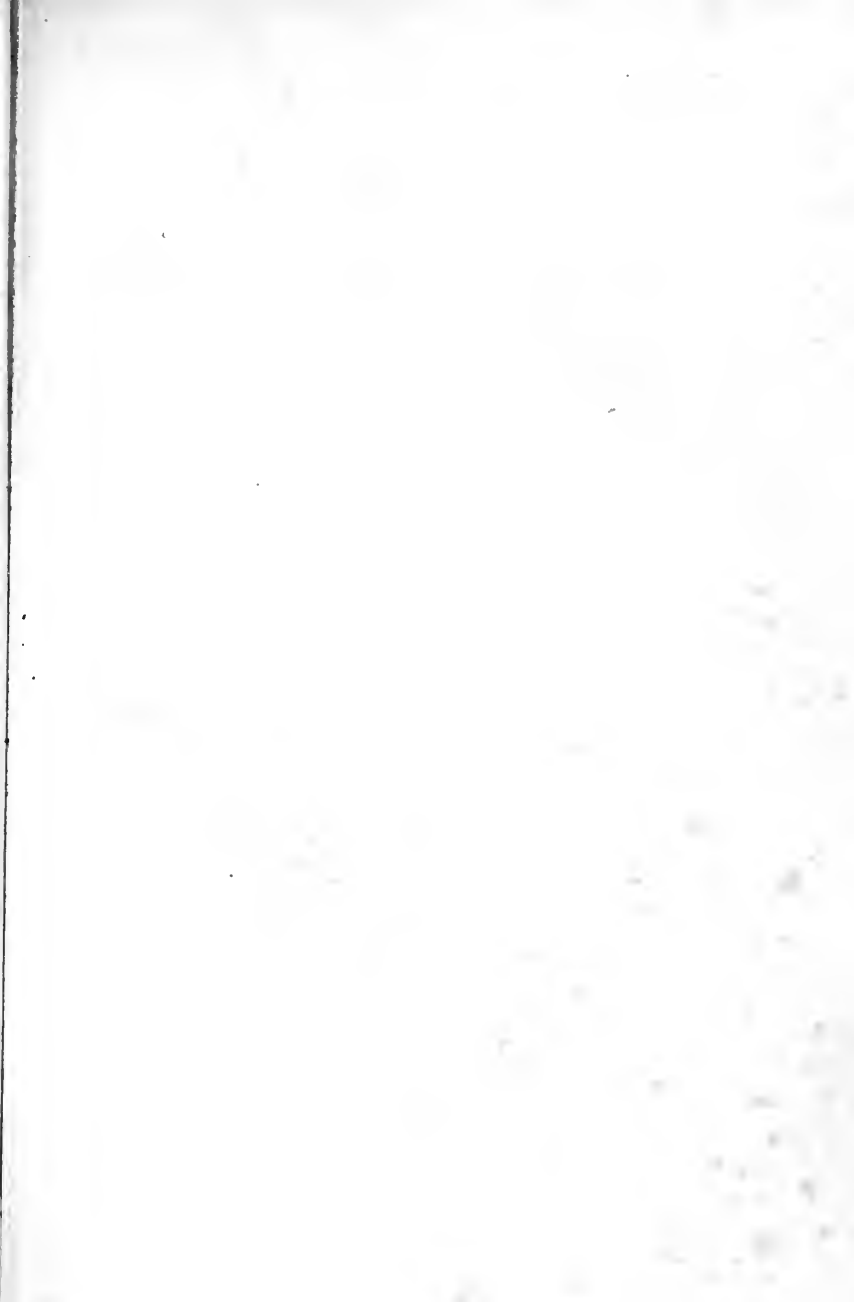
Again for a space he was silent, and the stillness was only broken by the sobbings of those who sat around, for the man who had cherished a generous love for all things great and small had made many to love him. Now that death had come to him, it seemed to these, as the old peasant had said, that their sun was sinking and a great darkness overwhelming their world.

"Sister," he said presently, for the lover was once more the recluse, and the habit of the phraseology which had been on his lips for fifty years returned to him instinctively with the yellow robe; "Sister, much evil have I done, and some good, . . . and ofttimes evil hath resulted where good was planned . . . though I have sought to aid my fellow-men, my brothers on this earth. Now . . . I pass away. The good and the evil . . . both will be accounted to me. . . . I wonder greatly . . . what will be my next incarnation? For

I am still very far from Nirvana, . . . sister of mine! . . . If I . . . if I am doomed to return in the guise of a . . . beast, . . . I would be some creature kind and patient . . . yoked to the service of man. . . . And in my death . . . since I cannot be of use to my fellows of mine own kind . . . I would serve my brothers, the beasts. . . . Wherefore, sister, when life hath left me, . . . let my legs and my arms be . . . severed, . . . severed and given to the vultures and kites and crows. . . . My body can go to feed the fires, . . . suffer my limbs to satisfy the hunger . . . of my brethren of the air. Mine are but the limbs of a monk, . . . and sister, the meal . . . 'tis their right!"

He fell back exhausted upon his wooden pillow, this man who had fared as an ascetic even within the walls of a palace, and his mind seemed to wander. From time to time his lips moved, and she who hung above them caught the familiar words of the Sacred Scroll in which is embodied the noble Rule of the Buddhist mendicant Orders. And thus, with the precepts which had guided him through life still uppermost in his mind, Somdet Phra the King, transformed again into the likeness of Chun the monk, passed out into the night, and entered once more into his Kingdom.

THE END



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